3. The Traffic Circulation Plan

From this chapter, this study will move on to concrete cases in Groningen. The first case is the Traffic Circulation Plan (Verkeerscirculatieplan, VCP). I will analyse not only the decision-making process of the plan, but also the modification process, which started almost at the same time as the VCP was introduced. However, before examining cases, I should briefly explain the system of the Dutch local government.

The Dutch local government, like the provincial and central government, takes the parliamentary system. Councillors are elected through a proportional representational system based on a candidate list of each political party at intervals of four years. After the election, they subsequently choose the cabinet, the so-called B&W (college van burgemeester en wethouders). Ministers at the local level, that is, wethouders, had been chosen from among councillors until May 2002, when it has become possible to choose them from outside the municipal council. There have been six wethouders in Groningen, except from 1990 to 1994 when there were seven. Although burgemeester is generally translated as mayor, it is neither the mayor in the presidential system nor the prime minister at the local level. It chairs the B&W, and is appointed by the Queen, that is, the central government. Each wethouder has his or her own work field or portfolio, like education, finance, urban planning, housing, and so on. The burgemeester is also allocated a portfolio, such as public order or public information.

Roughly speaking, there have been two types of B&W based on the way of organising it. One is the "afspiegelingscollege", which reflects or mirrors the political composition of the municipal council. Left-wing parties and right-wing parties then share seats in the B&W. Another type is the "meerderheidscollege" or "programcollege", which is formed by political parties that agree on a policy programme and together occupy the majority of seats in the council. If this type of B&W is chosen, the municipal council is divided into government parties, which have seats in, or support, the B&W, and nongovernment parties.

Although the VCP was realised in 1977, this chapter will begin by explaining about a much earlier period, when a political and planning background was formed for the VCP. In explaining the decision-making process, this chapter will first focus on the public process in terms of public participation. I will analyse the process also in terms of "politicisation" and "polarisation", both of which were, simultaneously with public participation, strived for by political leaders. Subsequently, the internal process of the dominant party PvdA regarding the VCP will be analysed. Finally, the modification process of the VCP will be analysed in terms of public participation and political parties. Here, I will also precisely examine the effects of the VCP, which were investigated in the modification process.1
Table 3.1
The Chronology of the VCP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 1970</td>
<td>the municipal council approved the demolition of the Harmonie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1972</td>
<td>the municipal council approved the Objectives Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1975</td>
<td>the VCP Groningen Basic Data was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1975</td>
<td>the VCP Part II was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1975</td>
<td>the draft of the VCP was leaked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1975</td>
<td>the B&amp;W decided the modified VCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1975</td>
<td>the municipal council approved the VCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1977</td>
<td>the inner city was divided into four sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1980</td>
<td>the B&amp;W published the Midterm Review of the VCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1981</td>
<td>the B&amp;W published the Inner City Traffic Examined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1982</td>
<td>the municipal council approved how to modify the VCP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. The inner city of Groningen and the VCP.
3.1 Public Participation, Politicisation, and Polarisation

3.1.1 Political Breakthrough and Objectives Document

Modernist Planning

The Dutch Government published the Second National Spatial Planning Document in September 1966. Written in a period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s, the plan estimated that the national population would grow from 12.4 million in 1966 to 20 million in 2000. It proposed the “spreading policy” as a basic principle in order to protect the Randstad area, where population and industry was concentrated, from overcrowding. Hence it allocated a population of 3 million in 2000 to the northern three provinces with 1.3 million at that moment, and between 250,000 to 500,000 to the biggest city in those provinces, Groningen, whose population was 160,000 in those days.

In response to this assignment, the municipality of Groningen set about revising the structure plan of 1961, and published the draft Structure Plan Groningen of 1969. This draft plans to build about 40,000 houses, mainly by developing the north-eastern part of the city, Noorddijk (14,000~15,000 houses), and the western part, Hoogkerk (13,000 houses). It also proposes inserting “green sectors”, running from the surrounding areas to the inner city, between built-up areas (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. The draft Structure Plan Groningen of 1969.
The municipality also published a series of plans particularly for the inner city from the end of 1969 to early 1970. These were the Structure Plan Inner City Groningen of 1969\(^7\), the Traffic Plan Centre Groningen\(^8\), and the Parking Plan Centre Groningen 1970-1975\(^9\). One of these, the Traffic Plan, the so-called plan-Goudappel\(^10\), is based on the assumption that the vast majority of trips between the surrounding areas and the inner city would be made by car, although it designates in the city centre the "city garden (stadserf)" where the first priority is given to walking. In order to accommodate this huge amount of car traffic, the plan proposes transforming the existing radial road system into a "tangent system" (Figure 3.3). It stresses the necessity to place the "stream tangents (stroomtangentenstelsel)" as close to the "distribution system (verdeelsystem)" of Diepenring as possible for the smooth traffic flow. As a result, the stream tangents, which are trunk roads, cut through the historical urban fabric, causing the demolition of a large amount of buildings. The municipality had already bought many houses on the proposed road alignments in and
around the inner city for this plan in the 1960s. On the other hand, the Parking Plan gives the construction of a parking garage under Vismarkt the highest priority, and also proposes a garage under neighbouring Grote Markt in the long run.

These plans were typically modernist, in a sense that they were characterised by the expectation for growth, the emphasis on efficiency, and the belief in technology. They had gone through the official procedure for public participation, including public hearings. The responses from the public had been processed by the autumn of 1970, and these plans just waited to be proposed to the municipal council.

Political Breakthrough
While modernist thinking and practices continued in the field of urban planning, a drastic change was going on in the field of politics and this change had finally brought about a fundamental turnaround in urban planning.

In the municipal council of Groningen, the PvdA had consistently been the biggest party since its establishment in 1946. However, lacking the successive alternation of generations of party leaders, it gradually declined into a party dominated by people from an older generation. Particularly in the 1960s, the "Troika", which consisted of W. Hendriks (who held the first place in the candidate list, and was wethouder), B. Tent (chairman of the Groningen federation of the PvdA), and M. Kastermans (chairman of the party group), had grasped almost all the decision-making power within the party.

On the other hand, political parties, including the PvdA, had put more emphasis on collegiality than on advocating their own policy and competing with one another. As a result, the B&W had been organised as the afspiegelingscollege, with the PvdA sharing seats with the Christian parties and VVD (Liberal Party). Therefore, one of Arendt Lijphart’s “rules of the game”, “Proportionality”, was indeed applied also in Groningen. This rule should contribute to the "success of the politics of accommodation in Holland" (1968, p.129), according to Lijphart. In fact, the members of the B&W tended to be conspicuously fixed, and the B&W did not show any impetus to propose and pursue new policies. Instead, municipal civil servants had the substantial power for policy making. Particularly H.J. Dix, the director of the Department of Urban Development and Housing, and J. Snijder, the director of the Department of Public Works, were even called “Emperors of Zuiderdiep”, deriving from the fact that both departments were located along Gedempte Zuiderdiep.

It was the New Left youngsters that broke through the above situation. They had emerged since the middle of the 1960s based at the RUG. While they criticised the modernist urban development by the municipality, the PvdA members among them demanded that discussion within the PvdA should be open and stimulated, inviting other students to join their party. The latter is what the American New Left Movement did not or could not pursue without any promising political parties at the local level. In the local election of 1966, three young members of the PvdA, K. van Weringh, J. Postma, and J. Koppenol, were placed in
the higher positions of the candidate list, and succeeded in advancing into the municipal council. The New Left of the PvdA successively confronted the Troika by acquiring the posts of the executives of the divisions and federation of the party.

It was the Harmonie-matter that worked as a decisive “catalyst” for the New Left Movement of Groningen. The concert hall, the Harmonie, which was built in 1855, had been the seat for the Northern Philharmonic Orchestra. However, it had become obsolete in the eyes of the municipality, and was sold to the RUG in 1963, which planned to build university facilities on the site. The RUG and the municipality came to an agreement the same year, which stipulated the demolition of the Harmonie after the municipality built a new concert hall, the Cultuurcentrum, just outside the canal ring. Architects and cultural groups opposed this plan, and the opposition movement grew rapidly after students joined. They argued for the restoration of the Harmonie, not only because they wanted to conserve a historic building, but also because they thought in terms of cultural policy, “Art must be placed among everyday activities in the middle of the city” (Hajema, 2001, p.188). Students, with support from architects, proposed a counter plan titled “In Harmonie”, which intended not only to restore the concert hall but also to place some facilities with social function around the concert hall to create a place for encounter between citizens and students.

The B&W, under the initiative of Burgemeester J.J.A. Berger (PvdA), had consistently supported the plan to build the Cultuurcentrum, which should necessarily lead to the demolition of the Harmonie. The municipal council, with a lot of students in the gallery, approved the proposal by the B&W to build the Cultuurcentrum on January 12th, 1970. Of thirty-nine councillors in total, there were only six who voted against it. Among fourteen PvdA councillors, only two (Postma and Van Wering) opposed it.19 However, this Harmonie-matter did not mean the victory of the long-established wing of the PvdA. On the contrary, this dispute made its retreat decisive by clearly showing its obsolete views. On February 19th, 1970, just one month after the settlement of the Harmonie-matter, the Groningen federation of the PvdA held the general member meeting to decide the candidate list for the local election of June. After discussion running five hours, with unprecedented large numbers of participants, it was decided to put only six of the fourteen incumbents in the promising places in the list. Although Hendriks, a part of the Troika, was put in the first place as before, Kastermans was expelled to a low place. Instead, the New Left young, just graduated from university, won a victory. Postma got the second place, Max van den Berg the third place, and Jacques Wallage the fourth place in the list. The effort to put Kastermans in the third place, instead of Van den Berg, failed by 87 to 220. After this assembly, Kastermans resigned as chairman of the party group and councillor. Tent, also a part of the Troika, resigned as chairman of the federation.

The PvdA fell to its lowest position in the election of 1966, and renewed this worst record by further losing one seat in 1970, securing a total of only thirteen seats, which still kept its dominant position in the municipal council. However, the party group, like party members
as a whole, was rejuvenated totally, and chose Wallage (twenty-four years old) as
chairman of the party group. Although the B&W was, as usual, organised as an
afspiegelingscollege, Van den Berg (twenty-five years old), together with Hendriks, was
chosen from the PvdA to become wethouder. Van den Berg got the portfolio for traffic,
housing, and urban development as well as culture. To “democratise” local governance,
these young PvdA leaders advocated not only public participation, an idea originating from
the American New Left Movement, but also politicisation and polarisation. Therefore,
besides involving the public substantially in policy making, they tried to get the substantial
power for policy making back from the bureaucrats (politicisation) and pursue the party’s
policy without compromising with other parties (polarisation). In other words, they tried to
break through the “rules of the game” (1968) as praised by Lijphart, which Dutch society
had used to.

Burgemeester Berger left the PvdA and also resigned during his tenure of office in
February 1971. H. Buiter (PvdA) became new burgemeester in September.

The Objectives Document
The new B&W, which was formed in September 1970, was quickly thrown into internal
conflict about how to deal with the four plans, just waiting to be proposed to the municipal
council. Van den Berg, in charge of these plans, insisted on shelving the three plans for the
inner city, while other wethouders were sympathetic to these plans. Van den Berg finally
won the agreement from other wethouders. On May 10th, 1971, the B&W decided that,
although it would propose the draft Structure Plan Groningen of 1969 to the municipal
council without delay, it would suspend the other three plans and, instead, work out an
utterly new planning principle for the inner city. As an organisation to carry out this task,
the Inner City Team was formed in May. Besides municipal civil servants, four experts20
from outside joined in the team, and those experts took the initiative in drafting the
planning principle. Via the Purposes Document21 in October 1971 and the Criteria
Document22 in January 1972, the team submitted the Document Objectives Inner City
Groningen23, generally called the Objectives Document24, in May 1972. This Objectives
Document puts forward the following two objectives, which were later translated as the
strengthening of the “encounter function”25 of the inner city:

5.1.1. The inner-city plan intends to be based on the guidelines
-- such a design of the city centre that conditions (i.e. the environment) are created under which a
free encounter with and active as well as passive involvement in the urban activities can develop
-- in such a way that residents of the city and the region can experience this individually and as a
group as the high point of urban life (p.18)

Concerning traffic, it adopts the principle of restraining car use on one hand, and giving
priority to public transport, bicycles, and pedestrians on the other hand:

6.5.3. In order to provide favourable accessibility of the centre, priority must be given to the
extension of public transport and the construction of bicycle routes from surrounding areas to the
city centre. (...) (p.24)

6.5.4. The behaviour of visitors as pedestrians is decisive for the traffic relations within the city
7.4.1. It was already pointed out that the behaviour of visitors as pedestrians is decisive for the traffic relations within the city centre. In this centre, and perhaps also elsewhere in the inner city, pedestrians must in principle have priority over car traffic. In these areas, measures must be taken with which no through traffic is possible. (pp.24-5)

7.4.5. Traffic in the inner city must be accommodated within the street space currently available for it. In order to use the space available for traffic as efficiently as possible, priorities must be granted to public transport and cyclists. (...) (p.33)

The B&W was again thrown into conflict around this Objectives Document. Van den Berg pressed for adopting it, while other wethouders, including Hendriks, were severely critical about it. This stalemate came to an end unexpectedly and dramatically.

When a reduced budget for the coming year was placed on the agenda of the B&W meeting in September 1972, Van den Berg rejected discussion of it. In his view, it was an ad hoc policy, not based upon a long-term plan. The Christian party groups, irritated by his repeated uncompromising attitude, moved a vote of no confidence against him in the municipal council on September 4th. Contrary to their expectation, all the PvdA councillors, including Hendriks, opposed this. The CPN (Communist Party), D’66, and PSP also opposed, and the motion was rejected by 14 to 22. In the face of this result, Wethouder A.C.C. Nijhoff (VVD) and Wethouder F.H. Von Meyenfeld and P.G. van Delden (both Christian representatives) resigned their positions, saying that it was impossible to work with Van den Berg. In addition, Hendriks also resigned as wethouder the next morning.

In response, the PvdA, based on the principle of polarisation, chose to form the meerderheidscollege, consisting only of left-wing parties. The municipal council approved this new B&W by a narrow margin of 20 to 19 on October 9th. The wethouders were three from the PvdA (Van den Berg, Wallage, and B. Barmentloo), two from the CPN (H. Niemeijer and J.J. van Zanten), and one from the D’66 (A.A.M.F. Staatsen). The average age was thirty-three, and, except for the CPN wethouders, in the twenties. This was the youngest and the first left meerderheidscollege among big cities in The Netherlands.

The new B&W proposed the Objectives Document to the municipal council on November 14th, adding some of its own opinions. It also asked for agreement to commission a project group to make the draft broad local land use plan for the inner city, which should put forward land-use measures to realise the Objectives Document. The council approved these proposals on December 4th with the support of left-wing parties (PvdA, D’66, PSP, and CPN) by 22 to 17. With the decision of the Objectives Document, the PvdA leaders got the guiding principle to pursue the following policies.

The PvdA of Groningen had completed the political breakthrough with the local election of May 1974. While it placed Van den Berg (twenty-seven years old) in the first place in the
candidate list, Wallage (twenty-seven years old) in the second place, and Barmentloo (twenty-six years old) in the third place, senior Hendriks and G.J. Minholts could not get the promising places. This election, contrary to the last one, gave the PvdA the biggest victory in its history with eighteen seats. The party obtained a 40.4% of the vote. After this victorious election, it naturally chose the meerderheidscollege again. While the CPN lost three seats, and the D’66 and PSP lost all their seats, the PPR won two seats. As a result, the B&W was organised with four from the PvdA (Van den Berg, Wallage, Barmentloo, and L. Westerhof), one from the PPR (W. Wildeboer), and one from the CPN (T. Wits). The council approved this B&W on September 3rd, 1974, with nongovernment parties casting blank votes. The government parties occupied twenty-three seats of thirty-nine in total.

The VCP was planned and realised in such planning and political contexts.

3.1.2 Make Grote Markt Car-Free

Piecemeal Efforts

The B&W at first, at least ostensibly, made piecemeal efforts to realise the Objectives Document in terms of traffic policy.

There emerged a plan in 1973 to elevate the railway line, which traversed the northern part of the city. This plan should lead to the extension of some roads that had been blocked by the line. The B&W proposed prohibiting private cars from entering, among others, Noorderstationsstraat to restrain car traffic from moving into the inner city. It was intended to enforce this restriction as a one-year experiment, and to decide after that period whether it should be continued or not. The municipal council approved this proposal with support of the government parties (PvdA, CPN, and D’66) by a narrow margin of 20 to 1927.

In 1974, a bicycle path was constructed along Pleiadenlaan, and Van den Berg proposed to the municipal council the introduction of an exclusive bus lane along Oosterhamriktracé. Both the bicycle path and the bus lane were planned as routes to connect surrounding neighbourhoods with the inner city.

With regard to the inner city, the municipality investigated whether Vismarkt and Grote Markt could be made car-free. The former square was dominated by 120 parking spaces, and the latter, next to the bus terminal and surrounded by traffic lanes, had deteriorated into just a roundabout (Figure 3.4). When Van den Berg spoke with the Groningen Businesspeople’s Federation (GOF) in February 1974, he remarked that there would be several experiments to make Grote Markt car-free within 1974 and that it would be introduced in 197528. The committee Grote Markt, consisting of the police and the municipal traffic bureau, was formed to draft a plan, and published the discussion document Grote Markt29 in July 1974. The plan intended to make Vismarkt as well as Grote Markt car-free by applying the “loop system” to the surrounding roads. This was sent for comments to the municipal departments, the GOF, and the project group inner city, which was engaged in the investigation for the broad local land use plan.
Figure 3.4. Vismarkt (back) and Grote Markt (front) around 1970.
Source: Henk Voogd

The parking spaces on Vismarkt were abolished when the parking garage opened nearby on Haddingestraat on November 19th, and the square became a pedestrian area, including the south-bordering road (Figure 3.5).

**Dispute about Grote Markt**

In response to the outward efforts by the municipality, public attention was focused on making Grote Markt car-free in this period.

A citizens’ organisation, the Working Group Inner City Groningen, had campaigned actively for it since 1973. It organised early in 1974 a questionnaire survey for five hundred citizens about how they came to the inner city or what they wished concerning traffic. It had waited and waited for the “experiments” promised by Van den Berg, but these were not carried out. It asked the B&W about the schedule for the experiments, and offered cooperation. It published the report Groningers about Their Inner City in November 1974, which included the result of the questionnaire survey. According to this report, bicycles were the most used (37%) traffic mode to the inner city, and 60% of the respondents supported the idea of making Grote Markt car-free. After a demonstration by bicycle on Grote Markt, the citizens’ group handed this report to Van den Berg on November 20th.

On the other hand, the opposing opinions could also be heard at the end of the year. They
were possibly stimulated by the fact that the shops along Vismarkt, which was just made car-free, particularly along the closed southern road, suffered from a serious decline in profits. In response to the discussion document Grote Markt, the Chamber of Commerce (KvK) submitted a written opinion to the B&W:

The Chamber of Commerce in Groningen considers Grote Markt too large to function as an attractive pedestrian area. It fears that pedestrians will experience for the most part Grote Markt as an “abandoned area”. (...) A committee of the Chamber of Commerce thinks that the car forms an essential element in liveliness and colourfulness of the city centre. “The removal of this element can influence the attractiveness of this part of the inner city to a high degree negatively.”

In the municipal council, the CDA (Christian Democratic Party), among others, asked for a prudent approach to restricting car-use. It did not appreciate the report by the citizens’ organisation, saying, “it is school children that made the questionnaire survey”, and criticised the organisation for “hoping to kick off cars from the city centre blindly”.

The Beginning of The VCP
The B&W had, in fact, already set about drafting the VCP, covering the whole city area, in 1974. The direct beginning of the VCP was the letter from Minister Westerterp of the central Ministry of Transport and Public Works dated October 8th, 1973. There were in those days nine municipalities, including the municipality of Groningen, that operated public transport on their own, and all of them suffered from severe deficits. The letter noticed that the central government would take over these deficits on the condition that each municipality should make a traffic circulation plan (VCP) and submit it by January 1st, 1975. The gazette, dated April 24th, 1974, publicised the guideline for drafting the VCP.

The municipality of Groningen commissioned an engineering consultancy bureau, Dwars, Heederik en Verhey (DHV), to draft the VCP in May 1974, although the CDA criticised this proposal by the B&W, saying that it would be more inexpensive for the municipal police or traffic bureau to draft it than to contract it out. On the other hand, the project group VCP was organised within the municipality. The members were the representatives of the police, traffic bureau, and town clerk’s office, and the DHV. And “the substantial work of the VCP was carried out by the DHV in accordance with, and under the direction of, the project group” (Gemeente Groningen [GG], 1975b, p.9).

The Nieuwsblad reported several times, particularly after October, that the VCP was being prepared and that it would be proposed by the B&W to the municipal council in the middle of the next year. However, it did or could not mention its content at all, and the municipality itself did nothing to publicise it at the moment. As a result, the public, including shopkeepers, was hardly interested in the VCP.

Minister Westerterp extended the deadline for the VCP to July 1st, 1975 at the municipality’s request.
3.1.3 Decision on the VCP

The Draft Leaked

The public caught a glimpse of the content of the VCP for the first time when the first interim report, the VCP Groningen Basic Data, was published on February 27th, 1975. This report stresses the necessity of the VCP, saying, “the difficulties of motorised traffic (congestion, stench, noise, parking problems, devouring of space, inaccessibility to services) have caused a harmful influence on the function of society” (GG, 1975a, p.1). It lists the following five “municipal objectives”:

a. No substantial interference in the urban structure;

b. The facilitation of the use of public transport, of bicycles and the increase of trips by foot;

c. To allocate the existing traffic space to various traffic modes in such a way that a certain balance emerges between the use of a traffic mode and the traffic facilities for this mode;

d. The introduction of limited-traffic areas in neighbourhoods, particularly around schools and other special buildings;

e. The improvement of the residential environment in general. (pp.7-8)

Subsequently, it analyses the current traffic situation, devoting separate chapters to pedestrians, public transport, bicycles, and cars respectively. Therefore, this report, as the title indicates, does not touch on the concrete measures at all.

However, judging from the above remarks about the VCP or its objectives, the Nieuwsblad dated February 28th carried a big headline saying, “If traffic circulation plan is implemented: there will be little place for the car in Groningen”. The first sentence of this article announces, “The car will become the biggest ‘victim’, if the traffic circulation plan for Groningen, which is now in preparation, is implemented”. In addition, the chief inspectors of the police, L.G. van Kats and J.F. Dijkstra, published a critical opinion dated March 5th, although the police joined in the project group VCP. After pointing out some problems in the report Basic Data, like that the data used are not up-to-date, it concludes with the following argument advocating car traffic:

The interim report traffic circulation plan is sometimes too easily based on pushing out the car. We can naturally agree with keeping out through traffic from inner cities and city centres. However, it can undermine liveliness to keep out all car traffic from these areas. Not everyone experiences traffic as unpleasant. There are also those who enjoy watching traffic. (...) When you too simply criticise the car, you very often overlook the fact that a great deal of the freedom that we now enjoy can be ascribed to the car. (...) A too one-sided approach to a complex problem has never been able to realise a substantial solution, even with the help of the stringent control by the police.

The Nieuwsblad gave prominent coverage to this opinion. Although the content of the plan was not yet clear, businesspeople had become gradually anxious through these newspaper articles. In those days, the broad local land use plan for the inner city was being prepared simultaneously by the project group inner city. When a meeting between this project group and the GOF was arranged for the broad local land use plan on April 9th,
The second interim report, the VCP Part II\(^4\), was published on May 22nd. This report mainly dealt with bus traffic, including an idea of moving the function of the bus terminal from Grote Markt to Zuiderdiep and giving Zuiderdiep the terminal function not only for city buses but also for regional buses. The B&W picked up two projects from this Part II, namely, the creation of a pedestrian area on the south of Grote Markt and the reconstruction of Zuiderdiep, and tried to realise them through the national relief programme for the unemployed\(^4\), whose deadline for the application was approaching. For these two projects, the B&W scheduled a public hearing for Saturday, May 31st, and the decision by the municipal council for Monday, June 2nd, and put them on the agenda of the municipal council committee Urban Development and Transport on May 22nd, the day when the B&W published the Part II.

Criticism emerged from various parts of society about such a hasty procedure. The Working Group Inner City, which had pursued car-free Grote Markt, condemned the schedule for being “extremely undemocratic”. Based on the schedule, the public hearing would be held on May 31st, while the Part II would be printed and made available to the public on May 30th. “This means that the interested institutions hardly have 24 hours to go over the report, summarise, test it against their views, and provide criticism. This seems to us to be an absolutely unacceptable matter!”\(^4\) The group demanded that the B&W should postpone the public hearing for at least two weeks. The business organisations, the GOF and KvK, announced that they refused to attend the public hearing. Standing for them, Councillor J. Kamminga (VVD) criticised the fact that the public hearing was scheduled in the daytime on Saturday, when it was difficult for shopkeepers to attend. In addition, Roel Vos, who arrived in the municipality as expert on public participation\(^4\) in June 1973, and was engaged mainly in urban renewal and the preparation of the broad local land use plan\(^4\), also sent letters to each councillor, saying that this was a “serious problem”.

As a result, the B&W gave up applying the two projects on May 28th, and, instead, chose the construction of the exclusive bus lane on the Steentilbrug and the bicycle path along Zonnelaan for the relief programme. Although the public hearing was held on May 31st as scheduled and about one hundred attended, the municipality only explained the prognosis of traffic in the future.

Even after this dispute, there had been no opportunity for public participation for the VCP. Again at the meeting for the broad local land use plan for the inner city on July 4th, businesspeople concentrated their criticism on the fact that they could not participate in

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\(^1\) 1975, the anxiety about the VCP and the demand for participation in its planning erupted: A discussion meeting between the Groningen Entrepreneur Federation (GOF) and the project group Inner City (…) threatened quite often to get bogged down in a complaint hour last night. GOF Chairman Klaassen had great difficulty in containing the individual grievances and demands from the businesspeople. There was clearly a fear among businesspeople that the shopping public might decrease by closing the inner city to (a part of) traffic. (…) The businesspeople asked for more participation in the making of the traffic plan.\(^4\)
drafting the VCP. Van den Berg, who was responsible for the broad local land use plan as well as the VCP, answered that the municipality could not offer the opportunity for public participation, because the central government imposed a strict time limit for submitting the VCP: "The wethouder [Van den Berg] protected himself by saying that the central government left very little time for the municipality to submit the plan. The Traffic Circulation Plan (particularly public transport) will not be subsidised by the central government, if the plan is not submitted to The Hague in a very short time." 47

After all, the project group VCP had completed the final report, that is, the draft of the VCP, in July, with no public participation. While it proposed city-wide networks of bus lines and bicycle routes, it advocated greatly extending the car-free area (autovrij gebied) in the inner city (Figure 3.6). The main shopping street, Herestraat, and the just closed road to the south of Vismarkt were the only car-free streets in those days.

*Figure 3.6. The car-free area of the draft VCP.*
While this draft was not yet published and “still concealed”, Chief Inspector Van Kats fiercely condemned particularly the plan concerning the inner city in the *Nieuwsblad* dated July 26th:

The principal objection of the police comes down to the fact, according to it, that the plan does not take account of traffic safety, legal and technical possibilities, and the load and discharge problems of business in the inner city at all. That is why, Chief Inspectors L.G. van Kats and J.F. Dijkstra, who are intensively engaged in traffic problems, have notified the municipality that they do not want to be regarded as responsible for the plan. We do not contribute to such a Houdini-like magic, so Mr. Van Kats translates the objections of the police.

The same article reported that many shops as well as large companies would become inaccessible for drivers. Although the precise content of the draft was not yet clear, this article caused strong anxiety and anger among businesspeople. The councillors of the PvdA, including Van den Berg, blamed Van Kats harshly, but it was too late. An article of the *Nieuwsblad* reported the unrest in the business community as follows:

A wave of unrest and anxiety has flooded the business community in the inner city of Groningen. (...) "We have scared ourselves to death", so voices Mr. P. Mees, the leading executive in the business world of Groningen, the feelings of his colleagues. (...) Disturbed letters and protests have arrived at the B&W. Individual businesses as well as business organisations try to press the B&W to make the plan less rigorous, "because otherwise the results would be catastrophic". (...) The Groningen Entrepreneur Federation called an emergency meeting yesterday evening. The criticism of the GOF focuses particularly on the fact that such important issues as traffic plans are decided without specific consultation. (...) The shock was also great for the Chamber of Commerce. It tries to call a meeting of the committee business community inner city quickly, in spite of its being on vacation.

It was an article of the *Gezinsbode* dated August 4th, 1975, that spurred this unrest. It carried a big headline saying, "*Gezinsbode* discloses traffic circulation plan: Inner city of Groningen becomes for the most part 'forbidden area for car', and printed a large plan map showing an extensive car-free area (Figure 3.7). Although a few more blocks were added to this car-free area in the draft of the VCP, this article, particularly the printed plan map, was enough to make the unrest decisive.

The GOF and the Business Circle Grote Markt sent telegrams to the B&W and the chairperson of each party group next morning. One by the GOF was as follows:

The GOF expresses its serious disturbance about the traffic circulation plan that has become known now, and makes a very pressing demand to the councillors of this city for opposing this plan. The GOF will never be able to cooperate to realise this traffic circulation plan, which does not fully take account of the interests of employers, consumers, and entrepreneurs in the inner city. The regional function of our city (...) will suffer seriously, if the plan is realised.

The B&W meeting on August 7th, where the draft of the VCP was on the agenda, was held under such a wave of opposition.
Among the government parties, the PPR supported the draft. PPR Wethouder Wildeboer praised it as the “first great success of the PPR in Groningen”. On the other hand, the CPN announced that it could not accept the draft. In addition, the PvdA also had some party leaders, like Wethouder of Finances Barmentloo, who had doubts about the draft. It was uncertain whether there was a majority for the draft in the municipal council.

As a result, while the B&W on August 7th regarded the draft as one of the possible translations of the Objectives Document, it decided to modify the draft, under the principle that, although through traffic was kept out, the accessibility for car traffic with business in the centre was maintained. That is why the Nieuwsblad dated August 8th reported in the first line, “The inner city of Groningen remains substantially accessible for cars”. According to the schedule decided by the B&W on August 7th, the informal council meeting was to be held on September 2nd, public hearings for businesspeople and residents on September 5th and 6th respectively, and the modified draft was to be proposed to the municipal council in the middle of September. This meant that the B&W intended to modify the draft in less than one month.
On August 13th, the extended project group, which was headed by Van den Berg himself, set about the modification, outside the municipal buildings, in the Martinikerk so that they were “not disturbed”\textsuperscript{52}. The article of the \textit{Dagblad van het Noorden}\textsuperscript{53} dated September 19th, 2002, which was written to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the VCP, describes the modifying work as a “myth” as follows: “According to the myth, Van den Berg locked himself with a small group of faithful officials and outside advisers in the chapel of the Martinikerk. When they came out, the notorious plan with four sectors was born.” It was also reported repeatedly in the \textit{Nieuwsblad} in those days that this modification was completed in just “14 days”:

\textit{Wethouder} Van den Berg dashed with a staff of officials into the Martinikerk. They worked on a more realistic version of the initial draft 14 days and nights there. It was told, chuckling, in those days that an official regularly left by bicycle in order to make sure whether what the planners wished in the church was indeed possible.\textsuperscript{54}

In this way, the draft was modified into an “utterly new plan”\textsuperscript{55} in a very short period, and this modified plan was again referred to the B&W on August 22nd.

Because the \textit{Nieuwsblad} dated August 8th reported the draft precisely, the Groningen division of the Royal Association of Entrepreneurs (KVO) also expressed anxiety and asked for participation. Its Executive A.J.D. Piëst regarded this draft as “fatal” for the businesspeople in the inner city, and found it “unjust” for the B&W to cite the deadline imposed by the central government as a reason not to be able to involve the public\textsuperscript{56}. However, as seen just before, the draft was modified literally behind closed doors, and there was no opportunity for the public to participate in this work. According to the \textit{Nieuwsblad} dated August 20th, more than twenty organisations and companies\textsuperscript{57} had submitted written opinions, telling their anxiety, to the municipality.

While leaving the plan for buses and bicycles almost intact, the modified plan greatly changed the restrictions against cars in the inner city. Based on the Objectives Document, it states the objectives for the inner city as follows:

- the inner city must be made car-limited, but still remain accessible for the car.
- in the inner city, more space must be offered to the pedestrian, public transport, and the cyclist.

(GG, 1975c, p.1)

Under the principle of “keeping out through traffic from the inner city”, it has drastically reduced the car-free area to just the southern part of Grote Markt, besides the existing area. Instead, it divides the inner city into four sectors by introducing one-way traffic restrictions overall so that cars have to go out to Diepenring to move from one sector to another.

The B&W on August 22nd unanimously approved this modified “much more realistic”\textsuperscript{58} plan and fixed the date of proposing it to the municipal council for September 15th. After
The press conference with Van den Berg, the *Nieuwsblad* dated August 25th gave a large space to the modified plan, with the big headline of “In order to stop through traffic: Inner city divided into 4 separate sectors”.

The accessibility for cars to the city centre was indeed greatly improved. However, businesspeople regarded this plan, which “divided this inner city into four sectors”\(^{59}\), as imposing the same degree of inconvenience on cars as the draft. Although the VCP was a comprehensive traffic plan, covering the whole city area, the VCP had become identified with the “sector-plan” and the criticism focused on this aspect.

The police published a precise opinion with 5 pages dated August 22nd, that is, the same day as the B&W’s approval. It points out that it is dangerous not to apply the one-way traffic restriction to buses and bicycles, and that the overall introduction of one-way traffic restrictions inevitably leads to a “sort of labyrinth”:

> Only those who are very acquainted with the place will perhaps be able to find their way in the longer term, while this system means a very unnecessary detour for most drivers; (...) With the proposed measures, it is impossible to move between two points, even within one sector, without going out to Diepenring.

The police also expresses anxiety that the problems, which could be caused by the plan, have not been scrutinised, and that the municipality will be lost, if someone appeals on the legal basis of the system. Finally, just like the draft, this modified plan does not pay enough attention to the load and discharge problems, traffic safety, and feasibility and so on, and “the currently proposed measures are not acceptable to the police”\(^{60}\), it concludes.

Although its view was not incorporated into the plan, the police, which had been a member of the project group, could go into the plan deeply and write a precise opinion. On the other hand, residents and businesspeople were confronted with two utterly different plans in less than one month. The municipality indeed publicised in the *Gezinsbode* dated August 14th that those interested could buy the draft at fifteen guilders. However, concerning the modified plan, the *Nieuwsblad* was almost the only way for the public to get acquainted with it. That is why, four business organisations, including the KVO, demanded that the B&W postpone the decision on the VCP for at least three months. Supporting this, VVD Chairwoman Nijhoff also asked for the postponement at the informal council meeting on September 2nd. However, Van den Berg rejected this request, answering, “The traffic circulation plan must be decided with all possible speed”\(^{61}\), on the ground that there was a danger of losing the national subsidy.

The *Nieuwsblad* dated September 5th reported in the first line, “Criticism about the traffic circulation plan continues to arrive at the city hall of Groningen”, and carried the written opinions by the KvK and the businesses on the southern side of Grote Markt as the latest examples of criticism. The former regarded this plan as “disastrous” for the future of the inner city, and was anxious that the division into sectors might not only seriously influence the transporters, but also give the visitors of the inner city the impression that they were
not welcomed.

On September 5th, the first “information evening” about the VCP was organised by the B&W for businesspeople. As this word suggests, the objective was to inform, that is, not to involve them substantially. Van den Berg confirmed here that, while enforcing the VCP, there was room to modify it. Wethouder Barmentloo introduced the results of the investigation by the Central Institute Medium and Small Business (CIMK) about the traffic modes of the consumers, which showed that more than 80% visited the inner city by other means than car. More than one hundred businesspeople attended, and raised a large number of criticisms and doubts. Most of the criticisms were directed at the lack of substantial participation, but Burgemeester Buiter conceded frankly, “the substantial participation is absolutely impossible, only informing is possible”. Just like Van den Berg, he argued, “The minister has put us on the spot concerning the time available. We must submit the plan quickly; otherwise the subsidies come in danger.”

In contrast with this meeting, the “information meeting” for residents the next day did not attract much interest with “only several dozens of people” attending, according to the Nieuwsblad.

These two meetings and the submission of written opinions, which were invited in the Gezinsbode, turned out to be all the opportunities for citizens to participate in the VCP. Businesspeople were naturally not convinced by the above meeting, and submitted a written protest to the municipal council, with signatures by almost all of the business organisations, including the KvK, demanding a rejection of the sector-plan or, at least, a postponement. Obviously, the meeting rather strengthened their impression that the VCP would bring about “disastrous results” to business activities in the inner city. It would have been possible to have consultations much earlier, the protest letter points out, and it is “overdosing“ to divide the inner city into four sectors. The KvK also inquired of the CIMK about the investigation, and revealed that Wethouder Barmentloo presented the data partially at the meeting. The wethouder cited only the data concerning the city residents, ignoring visitors from surrounding towns and villages. In fact, 70% in total visited the inner city by car.

Oppositions and anxieties began to overflow beyond the business community. The residents along Oosterstraat, which was designated as a bus route to Grote Markt, submitted a written protest with sixty signatures to the B&W, asking for changing the route. Residents along roads that might become shortcuts as a result of the overall one-way traffic restrictions also submitted written opinions. The Groningen division of the Dutch Association of Labour Unions (NVV) pointed out that there should have been a better consultation with the public in advance, considering the importance of the plan, although it supported the plan itself. Even the municipal engineers thoroughly criticised it in the Nieuwsblad:

An utterly new plan, in fact, was proposed in 14 days. Even a Max van den Berg cannot make a well-considered plan. (...) The factual situation was not considered. Nothing was checked. There
are businesses that have been almost completely isolated. Some proposals are technically unfeasible, because there are cables and conduits under the ground.66

While the Nieuwsblad reported the campaigns against the VCP almost every day, it reported only the campaign by the PvdA, as far as the campaigns supporting the VCP were concerned. The Groningen division of the PvdA printed 10,000 pieces of brochure, stressing the necessity of the VCP67, and handed them out at the venue for the information meeting on September 6th68.

Just before the VCP was proposed to the municipal council on September 15th, the GOF collected four hundred opposing signatures from businesspeople in the inner city, and handed them over to Burgemeester Buiter in the morning of the council meeting. The representatives told the burgemeester that the opposition was particularly oriented toward dividing the inner city into four sectors. In addition, encouraged by the GOF, some shopkeepers drew the slogan of opposing the VCP on their shop windows. The VCP was proposed to the municipal council under such a hostile climate.

**The VCP Decided**

The VCP was proposed to the municipal council on September 15th, with businesspeople crowding in the gallery and on the steps of the city hall, holding up placards and banners.

The nongovernment parties had the biggest complaint about the lack of public participation. For example, VVD Chairwoman Nijhoff, whose party proposed a motion to postpone the decision in order to realise substantial public participation, said, "These plans interfere with way of life of the public so deeply that an extensive cooperation with the public is necessary"69. She blamed the B&W for shifting the responsibility onto Minister Westerterp. According to her inquiry, Amsterdam, Dordrecht, and Arnhem had not yet submitted traffic circulation plans, and the municipality of Utrecht involved the public extensively in preparing the plan. She also introduced the statement by the chairman of the Association of Dutch Municipalities70. According to it, there was no risk that the central government would not take over the deficits, even if the municipality of Groningen could not submit the VCP within the time limit. Councillor F. Meis of the CPN, one of the government parties, also wished that the B&W made it clear that there was really a great pressure from Westerterp. Concerning the content of the VCP, the nongovernment parties pointed out that it would badly influence the economy in the inner city, or, as mentioned by the police and municipal engineers, that it would remarkably lengthen the travel distance by car.

Van den Berg offered thorough counterarguments against these opinions at the municipal council the next day, on September 16th. In response to the demand for participation, he again stressed the danger of losing the subsidy. He also insisted that there had been rather enough opportunities for participation, if compared with other cities: "Our procedure was better than in other cities. The municipal council could discuss it repeatedly. Furthermore, there were also information evenings for businesspeople and a hearing for residents." In addition, he argued, "this plan will lead to more accessibility and liveability of
The nongovernment parties moved a vote of no confidence in the B&W later the same day. This was for reason that the B&W had not asked Westerterp to extend the deadline once again, after the extended deadline of July 1st was passed. The municipal council was suspended, and the nongovernment parties and the B&W called a press conference one after another in the middle of the night.

While the confrontation had only heated up, the VCP was put to the vote in the third round of the municipal council, on September 17th. As expected, the government parties PvdA, PPR, and CPN supported, and the nongovernment parties CDA, VVD, and GPV opposed. As a result, the VCP was approved by 21 to 15. The motions proposed by the nongovernment parties were all defeated by the same margin.

3.1.4 Introduction of the Sector-Plan

The VCP Held Fast

The VCP included not only the introduction of one-way traffic restrictions but also the construction of many bicycle paths, the reconstruction of Zuiderdiep and Grote Markt, a drastic increase in the number of buses, and so on. Consequently, it was impossible to implement it without national subsidies. Because the municipality had difficulty in getting these subsidies, the start of the VCP took much more time than expected. However, the B&W had held on to the VCP decided by the municipal council.

Wallage took over the portfolio of traffic from Van den Berg on January 1st, 1976. The first problem that he confronted was the notice from the central government telling the rejection of the subsidy for the bus plan. The VCP planned to purchase twenty-eight bus vehicles and also to increase bus drivers by about one hundred. Because it made the accessibility to the city centre by car inconvenient, it was essential to provide sufficient alternative means of transport. However, Minister Westerterp refused to subsidise this bus plan, mainly because of the poor financial situation of the central government. This meant that one of the most important elements of the VCP had become unfeasible. Therefore, Councillor Meis (CPN) asked the B&W whether it would again put the VCP on the agenda of the municipal council. Wallage refused, saying, "I do not want new discussion. (...) the starting principles will be maintained." Instead, the B&W proposed to the council a budget for preparing the implementation plan of the VCP. This budget was approved on March 8th. The B&W decided to substitute the introduction of exclusive bus lanes for the abandoned increase of buses.

The B&W did not show any signs of being upset about the continuous resistance by businesspeople either. After the VCP was decided, the KVO appealed to the Crown about the unjust procedure. Three business organisations, the KVO, KvK, and GOF, sent a letter of protest to Westerterp. In response, in March 1976, Westerterp demanded that the B&W resume the procedure for participation, before proceeding with the VCP, and told the B&W to articulate how it intended to involve the public. This means that the very man whom the
B&W had criticised for obstructing participation demanded participation. The B&W, however, refused to redo the procedure. The following is from its reply to Westerterp:

Although the consultation had to be done in a very short period because of the time limit imposed by you, we think that, nevertheless, the received responses were fully considered in the decisions made by the municipal council and the B&W. (...) An extensive information campaign at the introduction of the plan will suffice. 73

The KvK came across this reply “with surprise and disappointment”: “We got the traffic circulation plan on September 2nd, 1975, while the municipal council had to pass judgment on it on September 15th. It is self-evident that this cannot practically mean more than a reaction and not more than that in an extremely short period.” 74 Subsequently the KvK asked the B&W to establish a “committee”, consisting of the representatives of the KvK and the B&W, to discuss the VCP. The B&W did not accept this proposal. “No one can say that the main points of the criticism were not discussed”75, it insisted. The B&W answered that it was prepared to discuss with businesspeople how to realise the VCP.

The KvK expected the intervention by the central government, but Westerterp later refrained from judging whether there had been substantial participation or not, on the ground that this dispute was pending at the Crown. When he visited the B&W in Groningen in April 1976, the B&W explained to him about the past procedure regarding the VCP. He found this explanation “very clarifying”76, and permitted the B&W to apply for the subsidies to realise the VCP. Furthermore, Westerterp began to praise the VCP of Groningen as a model plan to restrain car traffic, and, as a result of his recommendation, the VCP was chosen as a subject of an investigation by the OECD in April 1976.

Encouraged by this favourable attitude of the central government, Wallage and Burgemeester Buiter began to announce, in July, the start of the division of the inner city into the four sectors in the “spring of 1977”. The policy plan 1977-1981, which the B&W approved in September, included the allocation of one million guilders for starting the VCP.

The business organisations put up the last resistance. In October, the GOF called upon its members to flood the Crown with petitions against a number of traffic boards, which would be placed for the enforcement of the division into the sectors. Its Chairman J.H. Klaassen stuck to the criticism against the sector-plan: “Its introduction is disastrous for the most part of businesses in the inner city. (...) We do not reject the plan as a whole. But we will continue to protest against the four sectors with all possible measures.”77 The Royal Dutch Entrepreneur Association (KNOV), with the backing of the CDA, made and published a counter plan in November. This plan kept “the accessibility to the inner city also for cars at a maximum”78, and included the construction of a parking garage with 1,200 spaces at Westerhaven. Considering this continuous opposition by businesspeople, the CDA proposed at the municipal council in December 1976 an idea of holding a referendum about the VCP.

However, the B&W consistently turned down the reconsideration of the VCP itself.
Concerning the referendum, Wallage regarded it as “extremely contrary to the tradition of Dutch democracy”. He added, “It will be also very distorting in its actual effect. It is an attempt to justify through the back door by asking a simple yes-or-no.”

By the end of 1976, the business organisations had come to the conclusion that the introduction of the sector-plan was unavoidable, and, in order to “keep their daily bread”, chose five members for the guiding committee Introducing Traffic Plan Inner City, to which they had been invited by the municipality. This committee was intended to help the municipality to publicise the VCP and deal with complaints about it. The first meeting was held on January 7th, 1977. The opposition against the VCP was not heard after this, at least until its introduction.

The Inner City Divided

In March 1977, the B&W received from the central government the definitive allowance of the subsidies for the VCP, and Wallage presented the implementation programme at the press conference on March 15th. The first work for the VCP, the reconstruction of Zuiderdiep, was scheduled to start in May, and the division of the inner city into the four sectors was to be introduced on Monday, September 19th. That is, the inner city was to be divided literally in one night. The total cost was estimated at fourteen million guilders, of which the municipality would bear six million guilders, and the remaining eight million guilders was to be paid by national subsidies.

The implementation programme was proposed to the municipal council on March 28th. As usual, while the nongovernment parties opposed, the government parties supported, and it was approved. The implementation of the VCP was started when Wallage and Van den Berg drilled in Zuiderdiep on May 13th. This street would become a transit mall, reducing the width of the roadway, and also become an urban and regional bus terminal (Figure 3.8). Then the reconstruction of Grote Markt, through which the south-bordering road would become a pedestrian area, began on August 1st. Since the end of August 1977, the municipality publicised the VCP for the inner city in the Nieuwsblad almost every day. On

Figure 3.8. Zuiderdiep, before reconstruction (left) and after (right).

Source: Henk Voogd

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September 18th, various works, like placing new traffic boards, repainting the roads or moving the curbs, began at six o’clock in the evening, and the division into the four sectors was introduced in fact in one night on September 19th. At the press conference in the morning on that day, Wallage announced that “the traffic circulation plan was introduced without noticeable difficulties”, and the police, who dispatched more than forty policepersons to guide traffic, also reported, “whole traffic flows very smoothly until now, except for some bottlenecks”.

3.1.5 Theoretical Considerations

It was politicians, particularly the New Left young who advanced into the municipal council by taking advantage of the Harmonie-matter, that took the initiative in realising the VCP. In the face of uncooperative civil servants, including the police, they called in experts from outside and commissioned outside consultants, so that they could make up for their lack of expertise and get the substantial power of policy making back from civil servants. However, they did not completely exclude municipal civil servants from the process, except for Dix, “Emperor of Zuiderdiep”. Since Van den Berg became wethouder in 1970, Dix had hardly been able to take part in policy making. In March 1977, just before Van den Berg and Wallage drilled in Zuiderdiep, he was dismissed by the B&W, on the ground that “the current 61 years old director could not adjust himself to the changes that had taken place in the organisation of the department”.

The young political leaders had consistently rejected compromise with the nongovernment parties. The VCP was decided and started literally by sheer weight of numbers, leaving conflicts in which the government parties supported and the nongovernment parties opposed. This uncompromising strategy was blamed as “dictatorial” by the nongovernment parties, while it was advocated and praised as “polarisation” by the new political leaders.

That is why, the VCP was in fact the product of politicisation and polarisation. However, it was by no means the product of public participation, which the New Left also advocated. It
is difficult to accept the excuse that the omission of participation was inevitable in order to
draft and submit the VCP within the tight time limit imposed by the central government, as
frequently argued by the B&W. Westerterp himself demanded the resumption of the
procedure for participation, and the B&W rejected it. In addition, in the planning processes
of the Objectives Document, the broad local land use plan for the inner city or the urban
renewal, all of which were also tackled by the new political leaders in the 1970s, a similar
situation can be recognised in which the opportunities for participation were remarkably
lacking and, as a result, there emerged conflicts between the B&W on one hand and the
residents and large institutions such as the RUG on the other hand.84

In terms of democratic theories, politicisation and polarisation, as the New Left of
Groningen advocated them, can be regarded as strategies to realise liberal democracy.
Based on liberal-democratic theory, the initiative of political decisions should be taken by
political leaders who are selected through elections. To substantiate elections, it is a
precondition for the electorate to have meaningful alternatives, and, to realise this
precondition, political parties should present distinct policies and hold on to them. That is
why, the New Left of Groningen advocated a strategy based on participatory theory and
strategies based on liberal-democratic theory, and in fact they opted for the latter. Such an
orientation can be confirmed by the remark by Wallage about the referendum, or the
following argument by PPR Councillor R. Lode in response to the demand by Westerterp:
“The demanded participation is basically superfluous, because the constituents have
already chosen the policy, as worked out in the traffic circulation plan, at the municipal
council election.”85 Therefore, the process of realising the VCP was indeed completely
undemocratic in terms of participatory theory, but conducive to democracy in terms of
liberal-democratic theory. This conclusion can be further confirmed, if it is scrutinised how
the PvdA worked internally in those days, and how the party members could influence the
VCP.

3.2 Intra-Party Democracy
The young New Left activists of the PvdA advocated thorough “democratisation” of their
own party as well as government. In order to realise this, in their view, rank-and-file party
members had to be able to participate in party policy making directly. In the Groningen
federation of the PvdA, the New Left gradually acquired the posts of the federation
executive,86 and the executive meeting on April 29th, 1968, decided to design a “new
approach” of the federation. The goal was to facilitate participation of party members at the
division level as well as at the federation level.87 Van den Berg, who was chairman of the
division IV, described this new approach in an article titled “Political Protest through
Political Participation” in the local party bulletin, Onze Binding:

Political participation is for us by no means a convenient fashionable slogan. (…) We deliberately
want to give party members great influence on the policy. (…) Direct influence on the policy: the
working groups will be organised in the coming season over actual local problems (education,
culture, urban structure, youth policy, public transport), in which all interested can participate with
the councillor working in each field. (…) Direct influence on the policy: a councillor attends every
As a result of the motion by Wallage at the federation general member meeting, the working group Electorate Contact was established, which was in charge of proposing “ways for improving the municipal democracy”. It issued its recommendation in December 1968, which included the following ideas:

- involving more party members and those interested in political work by introducing working groups.
- setting up the “district system” in which each councillor has to pay special attention to his or her own district.

As the above quotations indicate, the New Left of the PvdA had mainly three media in mind to facilitate intra-party participation. These are district teams (wijkteams), working groups (werkgroepen), and general member meetings (ledenvergaderingen). Through these media, every party member should participate substantially in political discussion, and create party policy. This was the social democratic ideal for them. Was it realised? The following will examine one by one how these worked, first in general in the 1970s, and then particularly in the planning of the VCP.

3.2.1 The District Teams

The four divisions, which had together constituted the Groningen federation of the PvdA, were united into one division in December 1970. This new division became the biggest among the PvdA divisions in The Netherlands, with about two thousand members. The resulting necessity to bridge the widened distance between party leaders and members was the direct motivation for launching district teams.

Just after the local election in June 1970, which sent many New Left youngsters into the municipal council, each PvdA councillor was allocated to one or two districts in the city as “district councillor”. The September 1970 issue of the Binding publicised which councillors were responsible for which districts. The division executive members were also allocated to districts. For this purpose, they were intentionally chosen so that they lived in various parts of the city. In February 1971, Wallage, the newly appointed chairman of the party group, sent a “memo” to (district) councillors, calling for setting up the district teams:

the districts were divided. (...) The following step must be in my opinion: to form the district teams. The task of these teams is twofold:

1. The team helps the councillor to trace typical neighbourhood problems. It is often at first glance odd jobs that are brought about: dangerous crossings, lack of opportunities for playing, complaints about garbage collection, etc.. But I think it is very important that people, in this way, recognise that councillors are willing to dedicate themselves for them. (...)

2. The district team can also help people with private (social) problems to come into contact with the councillor. That is why it is important that party members who know many people in the neighbourhood participate in teams
The Traffic Circulation Plan

(…) The councillors are also urged to start to form their district teams this month! They can do it at random with the help of friends and acquaintances. They can also invite for a meeting all party members in the district and organise a team.

Despite the “difficult start”\(^91\), the district teams were organised in all but one district\(^92\) by 1972. There were fifteen teams in 1973, and the party annual report\(^93\) 1974/75\(^94\) proclaimed, “it was now impossible to imagine the Groningen division without them”.

**Vacillating Purposes**

Although the PvdA district teams, at least a few of them, had kept on working until the middle of the 1990s, their purposes or expected functions had consistently changed, and the resulting vagueness of purposes had been, almost through all the history of the district teams, sources of annoyances for both party leaders and team members. This vacillation of purposes can be recognised even for the short period of the 1970s.

According to the recommendation of the working group Electorate Contract or the memo by Wallage, the councillors were intended to play a central role in the district system, and the role of the team members was to help them. The October 1970 issue of the *Binding*, which called for participation in the district teams, also explained the role of the team members as follows: “In order to make this system work well, we need those who can support the councillor. Their task will be to follow problems in the district, including personal problems, and point them out to the councillor.” These documents also showed that the district teams were to focus on issues within their districts.

However, based on one year’s experience, Wallage subtly changed the functions of the district teams in a letter that was addressed to the (district) councillors, (district) executive members, and district team members in February 1972. While he emphasises the importance of the councillors raising neighbourhood issues at the municipal council, he tells, probably, not the party leaders but the team members to “consider also national politics”. But the focus still remains in districts, because he follows by saying, “Various cutbacks in public spending have results, also in your district!” In addition, this advice is mentioned in “6c” in seven pieces of advice in total.

Subsequently, the September 1972 issue of the *Binding* describes the district teams as more independent and active organisations centred on rank-and-file members, saying, “Your district teams (…) make it possible that all party members, who want it, can actively run politics and take part in the policy decision of the PvdA”. The same *Binding* reports that “various difficulties have surfaced” with the district teams, and, as one of those difficulties, poses the “question whether the district teams can actively engage themselves in national and regional politics”.

In response to these difficulties, the March 1973 issue of the *Binding* announced “some starting points for the function of the district teams within the Groningen division of the PvdA”. Without mentioning the role of the councillors at all, it defines the district teams
more clearly as autonomous member organisations:
The district teams are formed by party members who show the willingness to be actively engaged in:
1. problems in various fields in their own districts mainly from the political point of view of our party.
2. applying more general political point of view of our party, national as well as provincial, to the concrete situation in the district.

As can be seen, the party leaders still stick to the level of districts even in the national and provincial politics. These politics, however, are treated here as equals to neighbourhood problems. Less than one year later, in January 1974, the division executive proposed the “Definition of Standpoint over the purposes of the district teams”. After discussions with the district teams, this proposal was approved the same year, and applied, or at least quoted, for several years. The purposes of the district teams were defined as follows:
The district teams consist of party members who are engaged in:
1. picking up problems in the district, and trying to deal with them; in this respect the cooperation with other groups in the district will be often possible and desirable,
2. critically following the municipal policy that is related to the district, and, if necessary, acting correctly,
3. fulfilling a certain degree of ombudsman function in the district, with emphasis on referring citizens to means of help, information, etc.,
4. more general matters in the field of municipal, regional, national, and international politics; this can mean both that the district team formulates its own opinions and lets them known in the party, and that the district team examines the information and points of view of the party and makes its own,
5. expressing the activism of the party by active participation when it organises various actions,
6. basic organisation work for the party: spreading fliers, visiting new party members, strengthening the connection among members, recruiting new members.

These six purposes or functions were categorised later into three, namely, “party in the district” (1, 2, and 3 in the above quotation), “opinion forming organ” (4), and “implementation organ” (5 and 6). The “party in the district” was the original function of the district teams, and they had also in fact functioned as “implementation organ” from the beginning. On the other hand, the “opinion forming organ” was a newly added function. The district teams should now examine general political issues that were not directly related to their own districts, in addition to “typical neighbourhood problems”.

In 1978, the division again set about the re-definition of the district teams. One of the district teams95 submitted an opinion to the executive, asking for the discussion of “purposes, functions, organisation, and receptivity” of the district teams, and this led to the establishment of the Committee District Teams. This committee submitted a final report in January 1979, which included nineteen suggestions concerning purposes or workings of the district teams. Therefore, although the district teams were quickly formed, the party
leaders kept on groping their way toward the appropriate functions of those teams.

**Difficulties**

As long as there was no sustainable consensus on the purposes among the party leaders, neither the party group nor the division executive organisationally supported the district teams, although the councillors and executive members together ought to have formed the “kernel of a district team”. It was repeatedly pointed out that the link between the party leaders and the district teams was weak, that the teams could not receive information timely, and that the councillors did not quickly answer questions or demands raised by the teams.

Among the “various difficulties” posed in the September 1972 issue of the *Binding*, there were also the “contact between a district team and a district councillor” and “unclearness over the link between a district team and the division executive”. As a medium to solve these problems, the district team council (DTC) was established in October 1972. This was to be held, in principle, monthly, and a few councillors, a few executive members, and representatives from all the district teams were to attend and discuss or exchange information. A district team coordinator was simultaneously appointed. Since December 1973, the description letter had been sent to each district team a week before the DTC meeting. This letter included the agenda for the coming DTC meeting, minutes of the last DTC meeting, notices and information from the party group and executive, and so on. In addition, a contact person was appointed within each district team, who was to attend the DTC meeting as representative of the team.

With these measures introduced, the party annual report 1972/73 states, “evident improvements emerged in the contact between the district teams, the division executive, and the party group”. However, the same report concedes, “unfortunately the attendance of the executive members and councillors at the district team meetings could not always be realised because of the lack of time.” A few executive members and councillors did attend the DTC meetings, but they did not necessarily attend appointed district team meetings.

The description letter of September 1974 includes the analysis of the “state of affairs in various district teams” in terms of the purposes listed in the Definition of Standpoint. As can be seen below, the flow of information was not yet improved even after various measures were taken:

> It is naturally very dependent on information that a district team can use whether it can critically follow the municipal policy concerning the district and whether it can engage itself in more general matters in the field of municipal, regional, national, and international politics. Even after the appearance of the district team description letter, this information has too often been lacking until now.

The historical victory at the local election in May considerably increased the PvdA councillors from thirteen to eighteen. With this expanded party group, according to this description letter, the councillors had to be able to visit district team meetings more
frequently, and the party group had to inform the district teams more often, specifically, and timely.

However, the description letter of October includes a report from the district team Helpman-Oost, which complains, “it is still a bit awkward to get information from the party group and executive. It is very uncomfortable that something happens in the district, like buildings are constructed, of which the team knows nothing.” The relationship between the party leaders and the district teams even seems to get worse. The description letter of April 1975 reveals that the party leaders have complaints about the district teams, while the district teams on their part doubt the sincerity of the party leaders:

the cooperation between the district teams and the party group and executive members does not go well: still at the last district team council meeting, some district teams complained that problems were too long left in the party group or were completely brushed aside, while the party group often has to observe that the district teams prepare various matters too carelessly.

At the DTC meeting in April 1975, a “black list of problems” was presented to the party leaders. These are problems “that were raised to the party group by the district team council or district teams, but on which no reaction has been heard until now”. Some of them might have been indeed “odd jobs”, like “trees in Zuiderpark threaten to die out”, “expansion of side-walks”, “playgrounds on Strausslaan and Shubertlaan”, and so on. But it ought to have been, at least in the beginning, the job of the (district) councillors to solve these problems.

Although the annual report 1974/75 emphasised the importance of the district teams within the division, it recognised, “specific information did not reach the district teams and working groups appropriately in a systematic way”. According to this report, the flow of information is “to a high extent dependent on accident”. All the district teams did not always attend the DTC, which was intended to be a place to exchange information. Moreover, the description letter of August 1976 reports, summarising the last season, that the frequent alternation of the coordinators made it difficult to hold the DTC meetings and publish the description letters regularly.

Because of the lack of a clear understanding of the purposes, the party leaders could not state concretely how the district teams should deal with other existing or newly organised residents’ groups in the same districts. Particularly when the municipality, whose B&W consisted of left-wing parties including the PvdA, began to set up district councils in 1973, the annoyances increased among district team members. The Definition of Standpoint just said that the cooperation would be possible and desirable. As a result, each district team took various attitudes toward these groups:

concerning the district team Centrum, many members are active in neighbourhood committees. The state of affairs in various neighbourhood groups are briefly spoken at each district team meeting. Other district teams deal separately with the same problems in which neighbourhood groups have already been engaged for a long time. In contrast, the district team Oosterpoort finds that it is no longer necessary for a district team to engage itself in neighbourhood problems,
The ambiguous functions of the district teams and resulting problems were naturally formidable obstacles to recruiting and keeping participants in the district teams. It had been another consistent problem that participants in the district teams were few or that a turnover of participants was constant. It was a "difficult start" because it was difficult to find those party members who were interested in the district teams in some neighbourhoods. Indeed most of the districts could organise the teams by 1972, but the November 1973 issue of the Binding mentioned the understaffing and frequent turnover as one of problems facing the district teams. In response to these difficulties, the division executive proposed the Definition of Standpoint. However, this did not lead to an increase in participants. According to the annual report 1974/75, five district teams among eighteen in total did not function at all or hardly functioned. The description letter of February 1976 included a report of an inquiry into the district teams. Its title is "Malaise in the district teams". This report, which was written by a district team coordinator, describes the serious situations in which the district teams are placed: "Almost all the district teams struggle with serious lack of active members. About half of the district teams consist of no more than 2 to 3 active members. A situation in which we cannot or can hardly talk about a district team." Its conclusion is pessimistic, saying, "The source of problems is simple: lack of active participation. The solution is more difficult."

**Activities**

As expected, the district teams had difficulty in developing their activities. In terms of the six functions listed in the Definition of Standpoint, the annual report 1975/76 concludes, "no district team meets the full implementation of all the posted tasks". However, they had been essential party organisations as "implementation organ" from the beginning, particularly in election campaigns. Moreover, they did not settle for mere campaign organisations. Concerning 1 and 2 of the "party in the district" function, they were rather energetically engaged in neighbourhood problems, in some cases criticising the municipality. Table 3.2 is a summary of the "state of affairs in the district teams", which was included in the description letter of November 1974.

**Table 3.2**

**The Activities of the District Teams**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centrum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the district team has active connections with the neighbourhood committees Eiland, Inner City-East, Hortus-East, and the neighbourhood committee Inner City-West (being organised).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the Policy Plan of the B&amp;W will be dealt with by the district team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- call for attention to the parking problem in the district: the inner city residents must pay much more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lewenborg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- the district team soon starts the inquiry under neighbourhood residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- contact is made with the wethouder of education about the school situation in the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a letter is sent to the B&amp;W about the traffic situation in the district.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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- concerning the Policy Plan, the district team submits opinions about the school situation, traffic safety, furnishing of the Bakboordswal, the district centre, and recreation sport.

**Paddepoel**
- a concept letter to Minister Vorrink (environment and sanitation), which is about noise nuisance that the Northern Ring Road will cause, will be spoken with the district teams of Selwerd, Vinkhuizen, Schilderswijk, and Zeeheldenwijk.
- the traffic and parking situation around the newly built swimming pool and the sports hall.
- the following were submitted as opinions about the Policy Plan: the recreation plan along the Reitdiep, funds for investigation into facilities to prevent noise nuisance by the Western and Northern Ring Roads, traffic calming facilities to or along Zonnelaan.

**Korrewegwijk**
- situation around Deliplein.

**Selwerd**
- the district team has promised its support to the parents’ committee, which takes action against the traffic situation on Iepenlaan, and particularly suggested that the committee propose placing boards along the street, reading, ”less speed - children are worth it”, or introducing the advisory speed limit of, for example, 40 km per hour.
- the district team talks with the district team Paddepoel about the traffic situation on November 25th.
- all party members in the district will be informed regularly of the doings of the district team.

**Vinkhuizen**
- situation about the swimming pool Hoogkerk.
- the principle programme and also the Policy Plan will be handled.

**Helpman-Oost**
- the district team will meet on November 18th to talk about the place and function within the district and the division. It will be agreed if the activities will lie mainly in the general political aspect, or that the district team will acquire the function of a sort of district council.

**De Wijert**
- the district team will regularly consult with Helpman-Oost about the problem of Helpman.
- the contact with the councillors and executive members goes excellently.

**Corpus den Hoorn**
- the district team gathered a little bit before for the first time after long summer pause. It spoke only about the plan to change the route of the bus line 3. The district team supports this because it will realise a much better link with the market. It has consulted about this with Zeeheldenwijk and Laanhuizen/ Gruno and with a group of the councillors.

(Helpman-Oost/ de Wijert/ Corpus den Hoorn)
- The district teams in the southern districts cooperate at the moment very well for an important matter, namely, to realise a multifunctional meeting place for the whole of Groningen-south. Various members will inquire into existing and planned facilities at various municipal and other institutions, and publish a report at the next joint district team meeting.

**Laanhuizen/ Gruno**
- the district team will talk about the Policy Plan on November 19th.
- the contact with the executive member is very intensive. The councillor attends all the meetings.
- the district team wants the answer from the party group to their demand for opening the rear entrance of Stadspark.
- the team also deals with the bus plan intensively.
As can be seen in this table, many district teams were autonomously engaged not only in various typical neighbourhood problems, such as the lack of playgrounds or traffic safety, but also in city-wide projects and plans, like the Ring Road or the Policy Plan, although in terms of their influences on their own districts. Furthermore, in some cases, they cooperated with each other or even with other neighbourhood groups. There were in fact some district teams that could not function because of the lack of participants. However, the number of participants in total had increased from "more than sixty people" in 1972 to about 180 in 1976. Although the party group and the executive were not necessarily cooperative, and the evaluation by the executive was as a whole negative, the district teams had worked actively at least in the 1970s.

However, it is one thing for the district teams to be active; it is another for them to participate in party policy making. The latter ought to have been the most fundamental purpose for introducing the district system. As expected from the fact that information did not reach the district teams in a timely manner, they could not necessarily systematically participate in party policy making. This can be particularly clearly recognised in the
The District Teams and the VCP

At the DTC, the VCP was for the first time talked about on May 21st, 1975. A description letter was as usual sent to each district team in advance. However, the VCP is not on the agenda in this letter, although the bus plan "ring-line" and the "Bicycle Plan" are separately listed as the subjects of discussion, and, concerning the Bicycle Plan, a precise report is attached. Wethouder Van den Berg attended this DTC meeting, while the district team Centrum, whose area was the scene of the heated controversy around the VCP, did not attend. The June description letter reports the "discussion" of the VCP as follows:

An information meeting on the Part II of the traffic circulation plan (a report with desirable routes for all sorts of transport) is scheduled for 2:00 to 5:00 on Saturday, May 31st in the Tehuis. In the middle of July the Part III of the traffic circulation plan is published, in which more concrete measures will be presented. In September the municipal council will decide these things. Try to keep on following these things per district team, particularly concerning your own district, and tell opinions as soon as possible to the district team councillor!

Therefore, the VCP was not discussed at the DTC meeting in May. Only its schedule was given as information. The Part II was published the next day, on May 22nd. The B&W picked up two projects from this report, and tried to realise them through the national relief programme for the unemployed. This attempt was strongly criticised, as mentioned earlier. Although the B&W gave up this attempt after all, this issue around the relief programme was not discussed at all at the DTC meeting, either. Instead, the ring-line and the Bicycle Plan were intensively discussed. It was agreed, according to the description letter, that each district team would examine these two plans and submit opinions in writing. In addition, the description letter encourages the discussion of these two topics by adding the following "remark":

- concerning agendas 3 and 4: let some district team members specifically look after themes like these - the state of affairs can be talked over per theme at every district team meeting; more efficient work will be possible through such divisions of tasks; try also to involve in the district team work those members who are still not active through concrete matters like this!

The agenda 2, the VCP, is not the subject of encouragement.

This description letter, which was issued for the DTC on June 18th, listed the VCP as one of agendas. However, according to the explanation of this topic, the VCP was not scheduled to be discussed at the DTC, nor did the explanation encourage discussion and preparation in advance:

As known, the Part III of the traffic circulation plan is published in the middle of July, with more concrete proposals about the development of traffic in our city. In September the municipal council decides these things. Keep yourselves informed (the documents are available in the Binnenstadswinkel and the Stadjershuis), particularly also of the plans for your own district; make contact with the district team councillor in the case of remarks, suggestions, and so on.
In contrast to the Bicycle Plan, for which the explanation encourages to “try to work out these things for your own district”.

While the VCP was not discussed at the DTC, the Part III was revealed by the police on July 26th, by the Gezinsbode on August 4th, modified for “14 days”, and the B&W decided upon this modified plan on August 22nd. This plan was approved by the general member meeting of the PvdA on August 26th, and the VCP re-emerged in the description letter prepared for the DTC on September 9th. Now that the general member meeting accepted this plan, the next DTC meeting was not intended any more to discuss its content. In the explanation of the VCP, after pronouncing that the general meeting supported the VCP, the letter points out, “the general member meeting also decided that the party would go to the public with this plan”. So, “we will have to tell the public why our party has supported this plan”. In preparation for the coming municipal council meeting, where the VCP would be proposed, the party members “will have to consider at the district team council meeting putting a brochure into the post boxes in the greater part of the city.” The letter closes the explanation by saying, “For this the help from the district teams is necessary”.

At the DTC meeting on September 9th, Councillor P. Drenth concedes, “the VCP was not dealt with thoroughly in every district team”, while he praises the plan as the “golden mean”. Furthermore, he says that it is a “laugh if precisely the district team Centrum says it has not been able to talk about it”\textsuperscript{106}. The district teams Selwerd and Paddepoel fear that, as a result of the VCP, the Northern Ring Road would be constructed without enough measures against pollution, and refuse to spread leaflets about the VCP.

The district team Centrum made contact with the Working Group Inner City in 1973, and supported its idea of making Grote Markt car-free. At the team meeting on December 6th, it was agreed that it would cooperate with this citizens’ organisation to realise the idea. However, it did not at all examine the VCP itself in 1974. In 1975, it held a meeting every month from February to July. Traffic-related issues, like the ring-line, the Bicycle Plan or the parking problem for residents, were often raised on its agenda. Concerning the VCP, the meeting on March 25th decided to hold a “special district team meeting about parking, the interim report, and the traffic circulation plan” in May. However, the meeting in May dealt with none of these topics. Without discussing the VCP, the team broke up for the summer holidays, and restarted on September 8th, that is, after the general member meeting. The VCP was not discussed at this team meeting either.

Therefore, not “if” but as a matter of fact, the process was a “laugh”. The district teams were placed utterly in the same circumstances as the public and other organisations in terms of direct participation in the planning process of the VCP. They were just mobilised to propagate the plan after the decision had been made, as the annual report 1974/75 confirms, “the division executive, together with the working group and district teams, actively propagated to the public the policy of our party concerning the traffic circulation plan”.

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3.2.2 The Working Groups

The Working Group Urban Planning

The effort to establish working groups started as early as late in the 1960s. According to the annual report 1968/69\(^{107}\), the working group Socialist Municipal Politics “has already progressed very far”. However, other groups were in a “very premature stage”, and this report points out the necessity of formalising the procedure to establish working groups.

The new division, into which four existing divisions were united in 1970, was at first engaged in launching the district teams. After “it was almost finished”, the September 1971 issue of the *Binding* announced that the party would tackle “another possibility of strengthening the democratic character of the party”, namely, working groups. The expected functions of the working groups were either to respond to the requests for advice from the party group or to examine various problems on their own initiative:

- It is possible and probable that the working groups are consulted about concrete problems by councillors, for which they must look for an answer that is helpful for the councillors. However, in addition, the working groups will also have to study their problems for themselves, determine for themselves what is important or not in our decision-making and political positions.

This *Binding* proposed nine working groups in total, each of which had its own research topics, and called for participation by party members, attaching an application form with check boxes of working groups. For the working group “Urban Development, Public Housing; Traffic, Public Transport”, it listed the following topics as examples:

- Roads and green space. The car out of the inner city? City buses - where and how expensive?
- The next new neighbourhood. Housing and working separated? Old neighbourhoods destroyed?
- How can we realise affordable housing?

Like the district teams, the working groups went through a difficult start, and it took more time to organise them than expected. The problem was, according to the December 1971 issue of the *Binding*, concerned with the suitable relationship between the working groups, the division executive, and the party group. However, the above working group whose field was urban planning was very quick to start, and maintained its activity at least until the middle of the 1970s. The November 1971 issue of the *Binding* already reports, “the working groups Urban Development etc. and Culture have already long existed, and have now grown to big organs”. The party annual report 1970/71\(^{108}\) also reports, “The working groups Culture and Urban Planning\(^{109}\) held substantially attended meetings regularly.” The following is from the annual report 1974/75: “Urban Planning/ This working group consisted of 21 members. The subjects were, among others, the bus-line net, the taxi plan, the Interim Report, the bicycle plan.”

To prepare the Bicycle Plan, this working group organised the subgroup Bicycle. As seen earlier, asking for opinions from the district teams, this subgroup published a report with seventeen pages, Toward Better Bicycle Facilities in Groningen\(^{110}\), in June 1975. This report lists the following advantages of bicycles, insists that these weigh much more than
their disadvantages, and proclaims that this group has chosen bicycles and public transport as the most important traffic vehicles in the city:

1. the bicycle occupies only a small traffic space (…).
2. the bicycle takes less parking space. (…).
3. the facilities for bicycle transport are much cheaper than those for the car (…).
4. the bicycle has, in a way, high traffic safety (…).
5. the bicycle is a traffic vehicle that is accessible to everyone, the young and old, the rich and poor, an important social aspect!
6. the cyclist is friendly to his environment. (…)
7. the bicycle is sportive and healthy. (…)
8. the bicycle hardly has parking problems, in contrast to the car.
9. the cyclist uses no fuel, which is an advantage from the point of view of saving energy. (pp.3-4)

It proposes policies for bicycles at three levels, namely, “simple measures”, “more fundamental measures”, and “city plans”. At the level of the simple measures, it proposes, for example, the adjustment of traffic lights. The phasing of traffic lights, which is adjusted to the car, should be re-adjusted to the bicycle. Even if this causes delay for car traffic, “this has to be no problem, particularly in the inner city” (p.6). Concerning one-way traffic restrictions, which had been applied to the bicycle as well as to the car, this report presses for their abolition for the bicycle. The group held a survey of residents in some neighbourhoods, and among 113 respondents, the report states, 75% supported an experiment in two-way traffic for bicycles. The group, in addition, inquired of some municipalities that had already repealed one-way traffic for bicycles, and argues, in the report, that the decline of traffic safety was not confirmed anywhere.

As one of more fundamental measures, the report proposes the “main bicycle routes” (Figure 3.10), saying, “bicycle routes of high quality have to be provided between neighbourhoods, the inner city, employment centres, and other destinations attracting
traffic” (p.10). Finally, in city planning, “the distance that workers, vacationers, shoppers, and so on must traverse has to be small so that this can be moved by bicycle in a reasonable way” (p.14), and the report opposes residential or commercial developments in suburban areas. Although it is pointed out that “all the group members are short of free time”¹¹¹, this working group seems to have been engaged in research actively and produced well-founded proposals.

**The Working Group and the VCP**

However, this working group did not necessarily communicate well with the party group and executive. The annual report 1971/72¹¹² laments that the division generally could receive no information on what the working groups had done, and, as one of exceptions, lists the first half of the year of the working group Urban Planning. In other words, the party leaders could not keep up with this group in the last half of the year. This situation continued the next year. There were some working groups that regularly submitted reports, according to the annual report 1972/73, while there were some, including the working group Urban Planning, that did not give even data of their meetings for the Binding nor bring any report to the executive and party group. The above short quotation from the annual report 1974/75 was all that was written about the working group Urban Planning. Judging from the fact that there were some working groups, such as the working group Welfare, whose activities were more precisely reported, this group seems to have sent few reports for this year, either.

On the other hand, it was one of the functions of the working groups to respond to the requests for advice from the party group. However, as far as the working group Urban Planning is concerned, the party group had never asked for advice. Therefore, this group chose its themes based on its own judgements, pursued its research independently, and submitted reports or written opinions sporadically to the party leaders.

As expected, the working group Urban Planning was not integrated systematically into the planning process of the VCP. Concerning the involvement of the working group in the VCP, the group itself explains in the description letter of June 1975 as follows:

> Self-evidently the working group Urban Planning closely follows the development [of the VCP]. The subgroup Bicycle tries to evaluate the proposed measures and routes for bicycle traffic, particularly with the help of comments from the district teams, and, if necessary, proposes changes. Concerning public transport, the working group already agreed on what should be changed in the VCP.

The working group indeed examined the VCP in terms of public transport and bicycles, and submitted opinions, particularly based on the Bicycle Plan for the latter. However, it was not officially consulted by the party leaders about the VCP itself. In comparison with the Bicycle Plan, the VCP, which was revealed in July, did propose the abolition of one-way traffic restrictions for bicycles in principle: “The cyclist, like the pedestrian, can be in principle on every road, on every street, where only in exceptional cases one-way traffic may be introduced” (GG, 1975b, p.130). On the other hand, the VCP did not mention the
adjustment of traffic lights to cyclists, and the proposed “bicycle routes” did not include the circular route around the city, which was characteristic of the Bicycle Plan.

### 3.2.3 The General Member Meeting

**Political Discussion**

The New Left of the Groningen PvdA naturally also tried to “democratise” the highest party organ, the general member meeting (GMM). Until the middle of the 1960s, the GMM of the federation was only sporadically held and fifty to sixty members attended. Political issues were hardly discussed, and it had almost become a ceremonial gathering. The goal of the New Left was to change the GMM into a place where many more party members attended and substantially discussed politics. For this, as a part of the new approach, the executive let party members know the schedule of the GMM earlier, or tried to devote as much time as possible to political discussion at the GMM, keeping organisational matters to a minimum.

Concerning the frequency of the GMM, the first year of the new division, in 1971, the GMM was still held only five times, and the executive was criticised for holding too few GMMs. However, since the next year, the GMM had been consistently held about ten times a year throughout the 1970s. Table 3.3 is the date and summarised agenda for the GMMs in 1974/75.

On the other hand, the attendance at the GMM did not increase so much as the party leaders expected. After a year of the new approach, the annual report 1968/69 concedes,

| Table 3.3 |
| The General Member Meetings of the PvdA |

| October 30th, 1974 |
| - spreading of central departments |
| - regional problems, particularly the D.S.M. -factory |

| November 28th, 1974 |
| - the Policy Plan |
| - general political situation |

| December 19th, 1974 |
| - the financial report of the division |
| - election of the congress representatives |
| - discussion on “Peace and Security” |

| January 29th, 1975 |
| - fares of public transport |

| March 12th, 1975 |
| - the Principle Programme |
| - Lauwersmeergebied as a military training ground |

| April 24th, 1975 |
| - the congress |
| - natural gas prices |

| June 4th, 1975 |
| - “Possibilities and impossibilities for a socialistic development policy”, guest: Jan Pronk |

| August 26th, 1975 |
| - Thai Binh |
| - Kalkar |
| - the traffic circulation plan |

| September 22nd, 1975 |
| - the annual report from the party group |

| October 29th, 1975 |
| - election of candidates for the regional executive |
“the interest of members has hardly increased”, and concludes, “only a change in meeting techniques is no guarantee for the so desired participation of members”. Concerning each division, even the division IV, which was chaired by Van den Berg and led the new approach, frankly reports as follows:

The only difficult point is that, despite an earlier announced meeting schedule, people cannot visit the meeting regularly. As a result, the number of participants was considerably smaller than would have been possible if there had been somewhat greater “faithfulness”. We think ourselves that our programme must be worth it.  

After the unification of the divisions, the attendance still did not steadily increase. The annual report 1972/73 states that the average number of participants was 50 to 70, which was 20 to 30 less than the previous year. The report year 1974/75 saw on average about 150 participants, but the next year again experienced a decrease. In the beginning of the year, there were about 110, it is reported, but at the end, the number had fallen to about 70. It was particularly frustrating for the party leaders that district team members, who were supposedly engaged in party activities continuously and accumulating experience and knowledge, did not attend the GMM. Even in 1975, when the whole attendance increased, the description letter of April points out that “very few district team members visit” the GMM.

In addition, as can be seen in Table 3.3, political issues, including those at the municipal level, had been indeed raised on the agenda since the end of the 1960s. However, the GMM had not yet gone so far as to become a forum where rank-and-file party members discussed politics substantially and created party policy. During the first year after the unification of the divisions, the GMM “often later discusses implemented policy” 114. The annual report 1972/73 again states that the intention of the executive “to engage the general member meeting more intensively in discussion on important political issues” was “practically not realised at all”.

Bert Middel, the division chairman from 1973 to 1975, mentions the GMM in those days in his controversial report, The New Elite of the PvdA 115, which was written based on his dissertation and published in 1976. He compares the intra-party operation from 1970 to 1974 with that before 1966, that is, before the New Left came to the fore, and examines whether the intra-party “democratisation” was in fact realised as the New Left intended.

Concerning the GMM, he reports, for example, all proposals had been made by the executive at those five GMMs since 1971 that dealt with the “most important political subjects”. At the same GMMs, the annual reports by the executive had never been rejected. Those who stood and spoke out at the GMMs, except for the “top framework” 116, consisted of 8% of all the participants on average. And so on. Apart from whether these are proofs that the party was operated undemocratically even in the 1970s as he concluded, it seems that the GMM did not work in fact as the party leaders intended. According to the annual report 1976/77 117, the division evaluated its GMM based not only on the number of participants but also on the “substantial discussion and quality of decisions”, and the
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division had to concede, “the evaluation on each of these criteria turns out again to be of course not positive.”

**The General Member Meeting and the VCP**

The VCP was on the agenda of the GMM on August 26th, 1975. As can be seen in Table 3.3, this GMM was not exclusively reserved for the VCP.

In advance of this GMM, the August issue of the Binding included the explanation of the VCP, covering six pages, with signatures of Executive Secretary L. Beets and Councillor H. de Hamer. They first admit the lack of public participation, saying, “We regret that it was not possible to undertake participation for this plan.” After citing the objectives of the VCP, they turn to the explanation of the proposed measures. As can be seen below, it drops a hint of the modified plan, the sector-plan, but it is impossible to understand the content of the plan in detail from this description, particularly because no map of the plan is included:

> connecting Diepenring as a distribution ring with a loop system for the accessibility of the centre by car (…) Those who still want to come to the inner city by car will have to get used to park their cars at the designated parking places (garages). Those who must be somewhere in the inner city can always come to the area - this will, however, be accompanied by a detour. (…) By keeping through car traffic out of the inner city as much as possible, it gets quieter and more pleasant. The pedestrian area is expanded: Grote Markt southern side and Martinikerkhof.

However, in the conclusion "The plan and the party", without waiting for the discussion at the GMM, they proclaim that they support the VCP, saying, "The undersigned are now already willing to say that they experience this traffic circulation plan as positive.” or, "We want to say out loud that we can clearly recognise the party standpoints in this plan.” They add that they would submit “some suggestions” at the coming GMM. Finally, concerning growing opposition among business organisations, which party members of course witness every day, they find it “extremely remarkable”. The following is their reason: “The objectives of our party and of this college have been known for a long time. For us, the liveability of the city is the most important. With these objectives, we won the election!" "Therefore", they appeal to party members, "let's have this important discussion in a businesslike manner”.

At the GMM on 26th, the executive submitted a “concept-motion” for the VCP. According to this motion, the GMM supports the VCP, although it wants to put some “remarks”:

> In the opinion of the general member meeting, the starting points of the traffic policy and public transport policy, as formulated in the municipal programme of the Groningen division of the PvdA, are clearly recognisable in the traffic circulation plan as well as in the standpoint of the college van B en W. (…) The general member meeting, however, wants to put remarks on some points, which will, in its opinion, have to be taken into account in the policy document ultimately approved by the municipal council. (…)

> - Also in the surrounding areas, one-way traffic restrictions for bicycles will have to be abolished where possible.

(…)

99
- The starting point remains that residents of the inner city will also have to be able to park their cars in the inner city. (…)

(-)

However, the B&W decided the sector-plan on 22nd, and the *Nieuwsblad* publicised it, with a plan map, on 25th, that is, a day before the GMM. As a matter of course, the executive and party group were criticised by attendant party members for “having paid too little attention to good information”. At the DTC meeting on September 9th, many district team representatives pointed out, “the discussion as held at the general member meeting had little meaning, because various speakers were obviously poorly informed.”

After all, the GMM approved this motion, it supported the VCP, and it also decided, as earlier mentioned, that party members should take action for the VCP. The “remarks” indeed reflected the opinions of the district teams and working groups. However, they are, after all, just “remarks”. The GMM did not, or could not, discuss the VCP itself, and, as a result, did not ask for any modification.

3.2.4 Theoretical Considerations
The three organs, namely, district teams, working groups, and general member meetings, all of which were intended to facilitate the intra-party democracy, did not function as media through which rank-and-file members participated directly in party policy making. As a result, party members could not participate directly in the planning of the VCP at all.

Middel (1976) points out the facts that a small number of party members, whom he calls an “elite”, have a larger influence on decision-making than others, and that they are not representative of party members in terms of age and education. Based on these, he concludes that the rise of the New Left within the Groningen PvdA was mere “change of elites”, and that the PvdA in the 1970s could not escape the “iron law of oligarchy” put forward by Michels.

Indeed, the iron law prevailed in the Groningen PvdA in the 1970s, as in many other organisations, and, this fact undermines democracy of society as a whole as well as the party from the participationist point of view. However, for liberal democrats, this fact is far from being enough to establish that the PvdA in those days undermined democracy. In their view, there is nothing undemocratic in leadership or elite, and it is not essential whether intra-party participation is realised or not. However, if party leaders ignore desires of members, or if members cannot hold leaders responsible for what they did, then such political parties could be harmful even to liberal democracy, because political leaders could completely lose touch with public opinion, which constitutes at least a part of the public interest. In this regard, the New Left party leaders of Groningen acted within the frameworks that party members had created. In addition, the Groningen PvdA introduced rules to hold the leaders responsible in terms of these frameworks. As a result, there was also room for citizens as a whole to influence the political leaders through these frameworks. Therefore, the opinion of the public as well as party members was reflected.
indirectly in the VCP.

The Election Programme

Until the 1960s, the Groningen federation of the PvdA, like other federations and parties, had not made its own local election programmes. There were only nationwide party programmes. It had been accepted or natural for the party to make municipal, not party, policies after an election in the *afspiegelingscollege* in which parties from left to right had seats, compromising with one another. Or, policy making was rather the privilege of civil servants.

The New Left of the Groningen PvdA tried to break through this “much of a muchness” situation by emphasising the difference from other parties, under the slogan “polarisation”. As the foundation for this strategy, they started to draft an election programme peculiar to the city. The GMM of the federation in January 1968, in preparation for the 1970 election, declared the necessity for a “well-founded party programme oriented toward its own city, as a clear guiding principle for the new party group”. In response, the federation organised a working group, which consisted of three New Left youngsters and two oldsters from the Troika. This group submitted as the “basis” for the election programme the Concept for a Socialistic Municipal Programme. The Concept includes eleven chapters, like “participation”, “finance”, “education”, and “urban planning”, and the chapter “traffic” does not choose clearly between traffic modes, nor mention bicycles:

> The threatened stifle of the inner city will require a coordinated approach from the government in the future. (...) The priority of public transport will have to be decisive for the quality and quantity of the implemented facilities. In order to strengthen the inner city in its character as an encounter centre, it must be accessible for all kinds of traffic. Parking facilities must come as close to the centre as possible. The core area will have to become the domain of pedestrians. (...) The “short-time parking opportunities” must also be expanded. As soon as the legal possibility allows, this parking time can be extended. (PvdA, 1970, p.10)

The federation accepted this Concept, made the first election programme for the city based on this, and carried on an election campaign in 1970. The result was disappointing, with one seat lost from fourteen incumbent seats, which were already the smallest in the party’s history.

For the next election in 1974, the executive commissioned the working group for a Concept Socialist Municipal Programme to draft the election programme. The district teams were asked for opinions, and they examined the draft and submitted opinions. For example, the district team Helpman-Oost/ Coendersborg reports its meetings on November 8th and 9th, 1973, as follows: “The district team has thoroughly discussed the discussion paper Municipal Programme 74-78, and sent comments about it to the preparation committee for the Concept Municipal Programme.”

The election programme was decided at the GMM on January 15th, 1974. This Municipal Programme 74-78 includes twelve chapters, like “urban planning and housing”,
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“regional cooperation”, and “economic development”, and was sold at one guilder. The two sections “traffic” and “public transport” of the chapter “urban planning and housing” explain the party traffic policy. As can be seen in the below quotation from the section “traffic”, the party clearly chooses particular traffic modes this time:

> It must be continued to keep out through traffic from the inner city and residential areas. Public transport and bicycles will acquire a clearly privileged position. (...) Facilities for the car will be limited to those of the highest necessity. Existing short cuts will be closed. Concerning those plans that are not yet implemented, it will have to be examined whether the above principles were well considered. (pp.3-4)

The programme also articulates, “The policy related to the inner city and city centre is based on the ‘Document Objectives Inner City Groningen’ that has already been adopted by the municipal council” (p.2). As seen earlier, the Objectives Document argues for expanding pedestrian areas or keeping out through traffic from the inner city.

As a result of campaigning with this election programme, the Groningen division of the PvdA won the greatest victory, increasing its seats to eighteen from the lowest thirteen.

After the election, the new B&W, which consisted only of left-wing parties, set about drafting the first comprehensive municipal plan, the Integrated Policy Plan 1975-1979. As can be seen in Table 3.2, each district team examined the draft of this plan and submitted opinions. The final draft, which took into account these opinions, was approved at the GMM on November 28th, 1974, with about two hundred participants, and the municipal council decided this in December. The following is the quotation from “3.7.4. Traffic”:

> The continuously increasing mobility requires intervening in traffic choice by facilitating the use of bicycles and mopeds and of public transport. The relation between the environment and traffic encourages the exclusion of through traffic out of the inner city and the creation of car-limited areas in residential neighbourhoods. (...) The facilities for the car have to be restricted to those of the highest necessity. (...) The facilities for bicycles, pedestrians, and public transport (...) have priority. (...) Far-reaching traffic measures can only be taken based on a substantial traffic circulation plan. (...) Vismarkt becomes a pedestrian area. (...) We give high priority to realising our policy plan to make Grote Markt car-free. For this, participation by business circles is taken so carefully. (pp.127-9)

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the party programmes or comprehensive plans have been introduced, which work as frameworks within which the party leaders make each policy. Opinions of party members were reflected in those frameworks. The public as a whole were not involved in making the election programmes, but, of course, the opportunities were guaranteed to express their approval or disapproval for them at the elections. The election programme Municipal Programme 74-78 obviously chose public transport, bicycles, and pedestrians, and obviously rejected the increase of car use. It seems to be well-founded to say that 40%, or more than 50% if votes for other left-wing
parties included, of voters supported this policy.

**The Informal Framework**

Only the election programmes or integrated plans may be not enough to direct the party leaders. The election programmes were after all brochures with at most twenty to thirty pages in total. On the other hand, the Integrated Policy Plan 1975-1979 was almost a book with more than two hundred pages, but nevertheless description for each policy was somewhat fragmentary.

As frameworks for the party leaders, an informal framework, which was created through daily dedicated activities by party members, was not less substantial than the officially published documents. As Table 3.2 shows, the district teams were engaged in neighbourhood problems in their own districts, and sent to the party leaders wide-ranging demands. Among those demands, there were many that were impractical or not well considered, like placing speed bumps on the trunk road. On the other hand, radical proposals can be recognised in the Bicycle Plan by the working group Urban Planning, such as adjusting traffic lights to bicycles. Indeed, it was impossible to incorporate these demands or proposals as they were into the party policy. However, these voices of party members could contribute accumulatively toward creating a framework for the party leaders, for example as a message that party members accept or even welcome drastic measures to restrain car use.

In addition, these voices reflected not only the opinions of the PvdA members. Many district teams cooperated with other neighbourhood groups, and there were even some district team members who were more active in these neighbourhood groups. The district teams functioned as an “important link between the electorate and the elected,” and, as a result, the opinions of the public as a whole somehow influenced the informal framework.

The communication between the district teams and working groups on one hand and the party leaders on the other was not ideal. However, Table 3.2 reveals that there were some leaders who visited district teams seriously. The inquiry into the district teams, whose result was reported in the description letter of February 1976, proved, “the councillors and executive members have visited the meetings of the district teams very faithfully. No district team has complaints in this regard.” As a medium for communication, there was the DTC. Councillors and executive members, at least a few of them, always attended the DTC meetings, and members of the working group Urban Planning themselves attended this and explained its Bicycle Plan. Concerning this working group, Van den Berg personally attended its meetings.

The opportunities were indeed limited for party members to directly participate in party policy making. However, they participated or took the initiative in creating both formal and informal frameworks, and could take into account public opinion in this process.
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The Party Discipline

In addition, procedures or rules were introduced in the 1970s to make sure that the party leaders respected these frameworks. All the official standpoints of the division had to be decided by the GMM. The executive and party group were obliged to submit annual reports to the GMM. Furthermore, party members got the chance to recall the executive members and councillors. As pointed out, the GMM had not become a place for substantial discussion. However, judging from the fact that, at the GMMs dealing with important issues, like the annual reports, one hundred or sometimes more than two hundred party members attended, the GMM did play an effective role in forcing the party leaders to respect the frameworks created by party members.

Moreover, in the face of the local election in 1974, it was made a prerequisite to defend the frameworks as a united party group if he or she wanted to be placed in the candidate list. The following is the “qualitative advice” for the candidates, which was approved by the GMM on October 19th, 1973:

2. The (candidate) members of the party group defend the election programme that was approved by the division general member meeting of the PvdA, and are willing to test their policy continuously against it and against the decisions of the general member meeting.

3. The members of the party group take it upon themselves to make contact frequently and exchange information actively with members and parts of the organisation of the party, such as district teams, working groups, the district team council, and the general member meeting.

(…)

5. The members of the party group must be willing to:

(…)

- dedicate themselves in a good team spirit for full four years. If this is no longer possible, this must be discussed in the party group, in which the continuation of the councillorship must be tested against the opinion of the party group.

Based on this advice, the executive proposed placing two incumbent councillors, Hendriks and Minholts, outside the candidate list. They were the last remaining oldsters among the party leaders, and had repeatedly taken the minority opinion within the party group. The GMM on March 8th, 1974, where more than 350 members attended, approved the candidate list that excluded these two politicians.

Newspapers or other political parties criticised these intra-party operations as "corpse discipline" or "dictatorship". However, in liberal democracy, it is essential for political parties to keep to promises at elections. It is also very natural for liberal democrats to force councillors to act as a united party group. These are preconditions to prevent elections from declining into empty ceremonies and to guarantee effective government. These are based on, not a radical idea at all, but rather a classical idea. That is why, Tent, one of the Troika, took the same standpoint as the New Left in this regard when he reproved the New Left youngsters for behaving like a “party within the party” late in the 1960s:

In all their organs, the party will have to learn to walk the way to discuss all the matters openly and
fundamentally. These discussions within the party will finally have to result in statements, more strongly expressed, in VERY CLEAR STATEMENTS. That alone can give the party a face toward the outside (...). (...) if decisions are made, then the party goes outside as one man. Those who cannot accept this at a certain moment (...) must then take responsibility for this. 125

Thanks to these procedures or rules, the frameworks were not nominal but substantial. In addition, the New Left politicians got back policy making from civil servants, appealing for “politicisation”, and were themselves engaged in policy making energetically. Middel (1976) shows concretely how often the top framework met together in those days (p.50). Indeed even after the 1974 victory, the PvdA could not dominate the majority of the municipal council alone. However, since 1972, they had chosen not the afspiegelingscollege but the programcollege consisting only of left-wing parties, and tried to realise their own policy, avoiding compromise as much as possible. Concerning the wethouders, who were sent into the B&W by the party group, their responsibility to the party group was clearly stipulated in the decision by the GMM on September 14th, 1972 as follows:

The wethouders of the PvdA are obliged to refer to these statements of the party group in their political attitudes, and make an effort to realise these in the college van B&W and in the municipal council. They are responsible to the party group for this. If a wethouder deviates from the views of the party group in matters that are essential for the party group, then he finds himself in conflict with the party group, and the party group can call him to account for this.

Those measures that the New Left of the Groningen PvdA introduced for the intra-party democracy did not work as intended. However, party members were engaged in making not each policy but the frameworks, and the party leaders pursued each policy within these frameworks. In addition, these frameworks reflected public opinion. Also concerning the VCP, neither the public nor party members had any opportunities to directly participate in its planning. However, again, this VCP was formulated within the formal and informal frameworks created by party members together with the public, and therefore reflected the opinions of the public as well as party members indirectly.

At the election in 1978, the Groningen division of the PvdA lost two seats. But the PvdA lost seats nationwide at this election. If harsh criticism of the VCP by the business community had been shared by the public, the result may have been much more devastating. Within the Groningen PvdA, while Van den Berg went to national politics, the other three PvdA wethouders, Wallage, Barmentloo, and Westerhof, were placed in the highest three positions of the candidate list. It can be said that party members certainly appreciated the last four years’ performance of their party leaders, including their handling of the VCP.

That is why, also in terms of the intra-party process, the decision-making process of the VCP was undemocratic from the participationist point of view, but conducive to democracy from the liberal-democratic point of view.
3.3 The Modification of the VCP

3.3.1 Demand for Deregulation

*The “Ridiculous Sector-Plan”*

Although shopkeepers or business organisations were engaged in intensive opposition movements before and even after the VCP was decided by the municipal council, they became more or less cooperative in 1977, considering that the VCP was inevitable. As mentioned earlier, they delegated their members to the municipal guiding committee. In addition, a group of businesspeople organised the Council Activities Inner City in Groningen\(^{126}\), which was devoted to the “introduction that was as acceptable as possible to the inner-city businesspeople”\(^{127}\), and, for example, published a map showing the new traffic regime for the inner-city visitors.

However, immediately after the VCP was introduced on September 19th, shopkeepers or business organisations restarted to criticise the VCP harshly. They demanded to deregulate the VCP, and published reports in rapid succession, which showed its harmful influence on the inner-city economy. First, in the middle of October, that is, just before the deadline to file a lawsuit, thirty days after the introduction, passed, about eighty shopkeepers on seven streets appealed to the Crown asking to nullify a part of regulations of the VCP. Those seven streets were Vismarkt, A-Kerkhof, Brugstraat, Stoeldraaierstraat, Steentilstraat, Gedempte Zuiderdiep, and Herestraat between Zuiderdiep and Hereplein. Because decision by the Crown takes several years, they simultaneously lodged a suspension request against these regulations with the *Raad van State*\(^{128}\). Inner-city shopkeepers had mainly made the following demands since then:

A. resuming two-way traffic on A-straat, the A-brug, Brugstraat, and A-Kerkhof northern side, where the VCP enforced one-way traffic. This measure meant to reopen the route A-straat → Vismarkt → Oude Boteringestraat → the Boteringebrug.

B. resuming two-way traffic on A-Kerkhof western side, which the VCP banned private cars from entering, Munnekeholm, and Stationsstraat, where the VCP enforced one-way traffic. This measure meant to reopen the route A-straat ←→ Munnekeholm ←→ the Emmabrug, lifting the boundary between sector West and South on this route.

C. lifting the boundary between sector South and East, running along Herestraat, on Zuiderdiep.

D. resuming two-way traffic on Herestraat between Zuiderdiep and Hereplein, where the VCP enforced one-way traffic. This measure meant to reopen the route Zuiderdiep → Herestraat → the Herebrug.

The *Raad van State* overruled their suspension request in December, saying, “businesspeople have not made it clear enough that the Traffic Circulation Plan has caused a decrease in sales in large scale”\(^ {129}\).

The VVD also raised criticism in October, advocating interests of businesspeople.
Councillor Kamminga (VVD) presented the result of a survey that "he conducted personally under several dozens of businesses". According to this, particularly "small businesses" suffered from a "decrease in sales of 25 to 40 percent", and particularly businesses on streets away from the city centre, such as Folkingestraat or Zuiderdiep, "take a hard blow". In addition, he saw "the regional function of the city threatened".\footnote{130}

A few days later, the Nieuwsblad reported a survey of the influence of the VCP, which the Groningen division of the KNOV was conducting under the small- and medium-sized businesses in the inner city. The division was "shocked" with the "first dozens of reactions", which showed the trend of "decreasing number of visitors and decreasing figure of sales".\footnote{131}

In November, the Businesspeople’s Association Groningen (OVG) published the result of a survey that was intended to see the situation of small- and medium-sized businesses one and a half months after the VCP was introduced. The most important conclusion was that the inner city was losing "its regional function". Namely, in this survey, to which "about 80 to 85 percent of the inner-city businesspeople responded" according to the OVG, "more than 67 percent" answered that "considerably less people" came to their shops from outside the city than before. Concerning sales, the OVG estimated the decrease at 30 percent just after the VCP was introduced. Based on this survey, it predicted, "The decrease still continues". Moreover, according to the responses, "there are shopkeepers who want to close down their business".\footnote{132}

In April 1978, the KvK published the result of its survey. It investigated sales at shops in the inner city for the first three months of the VCP. It sent 653 questionnaires, to which 212 shops responded. According to the result, the half of the responding shops experienced a decrease in sales, and, among the remaining half, one third had an increase in sales below the inflation rate. Based on this, the KvK concluded, "the syndrome of the inner city, which had been caused by nice shopping centres outside the city and lack of parking spaces in the city, has not been improved, rather worsened by the Traffic Circulation Plan", and pressed the municipality for "some adjustment".\footnote{133}

On May 30th, that is, the day before the local election day, the Group of Duped Businesspeople of the City of Groningen\footnote{134} posted an "Open Letter" addressed to the B&W in the Nieuwsblad. This group was established at a meeting with 280 participants in January, and supported by the OVG. In the Open Letter, it criticises not only the VCP but also the Broad Local Land Use Plan for the Inner City of Groningen, which was approved by the municipal council in February. It argues, first of all, that they, "a large group of businesspeople, mainly from the inner city", are "seriously duped" by the VCP and Broad Local Land Use Plan, and "they are not alone!" Particularly concerning the VCP, "because of the lack of participation by true experts and those interested, this Plan not only works poorly, but also seriously undermines the employment and viability of our city". According to this group, "Our inner city is too beautiful and too small for a ridiculous sector plan". It harshly criticises the current B&W for being "so one-sidedly constituted" or completely
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ignoring “the interests of those who must keep the pot boiling in this city”. Finally, it demands to revise the VCP and Broad Local Land Use Plan quickly, referring to the survey by the KvK:

In this period of the declining economy, you must improve climate for employment and must not, like now (see the figures of the KvK), drive consumers and businesses out of the city and jeopardise employment.

In sum, in our view, we can demand that both the local land use plan and particularly the VCP should be revised in the short term in such a way that a considerably better situation is created than it is the case now for every group and specifically that group that provides employment and income for the city.

The anonymous spokesman of the group said, concerning the number of people who were dismissed as a result of the VCP, “Figures are already mentioned of more than two hundred”135.

Keep the Existing Policy

Although these various data showed serious effects of the VCP, the B&W responded with suspicion about the credibility of these surveys. They had been conducted in the “habituation period”136 and therefore did not show the long term effect of the VCP, or those shops that suffered from a decrease in sales responded to these surveys disproportionately, undermining the representativeness of samples, the B&W refuted.

On the other hand, the B&W itself planned from the beginning to comprehensively investigate the effect of the VCP. Based on the principles of the Objectives Document or the VCP, it should investigate the effect not only on the economy but also on traffic and the environment, and the environment was to include the “perception value137” of the public space, which had been regarded as contributing to the so-called encounter function. In order to compare the situation before and after the VCP, the municipality had already investigated the situation in 1976 and 77 before the VCP was introduced, in cooperation with the central government138 and research institutes. In 1978, after the VCP was introduced, it was conducting the investigations about the same subjects.

Concerning the demand to deregulate the VCP, the B&W argued that substantial adjustment must be based on the result of these comprehensive investigations, and that the adjustment, even if necessary, must be consistent with the principle of the VCP. For example, the Municipal Programme 78-82139, which the PvdA of Groningen published for the 1978 local election, states, “The traffic policy for the inner city will have to be based on the VCP”, and, “any necessary adjustments must not be inconsistent with the objectives of the plan” (p.8). In addition, supposedly based on the temporary result of the investigations and on-site observation, it already confirms that the VCP has realised its principle, saying, “The Traffic Circulation Plan, with the main objective of keeping out through traffic from the inner city, has been effective in dealing with traffic in the inner city” (p.11). In an “election debate” at the Cultuurcentrum on May 25th, CDA leader E.G. IJspeert and VVD leader J.R. Remkes argued, criticising such an attitude taken by the PvdA, “the left-wing college rigidly
holds on to political principles and is blind to the problems of shopkeepers”. Wallage, who also attended as the PvdA leader, responded, “The current left-wing municipal executive is substantially engaged in studying the adjustment of the Traffic Circulation Plan”, but cautioned, “those who want to make through traffic within Diepenring possible don’t have to expect cooperation”. The B&W did not intend to attract more cars into the inner city, creating a through route, he said, and those who demanded such an approach as if it had been a “harmless adjustment” were “in fact engaged in undermining the essence of the plan”.140

The B&W in fact implemented some adjustments at this stage, regarding them as urgent. However, all those were consistent with the principles of the VCP or Objectives Document. For example, because there were many drivers who ran from Stoeldraaierstraat to Folkingestraat, ignoring the boundary between sector West and South, the municipality narrowed the street in front of the Korenbeurs. The one-way traffic restrictions all over the inner city, which were introduced with the VCP, had also been applied to cyclists. In response to their complaints, particularly those from the Dutch Cyclists’ Union (ENFB)141, the municipality exempted cyclists from the one-way traffic restriction on Broerstraat, where students concentrate, with the Academiegebouw of the RUG and the university library along it. Or again for cyclists, it improved the intersection between Zuiderdiep, Rademarkt, and Steentilstraat, which had been dangerous for them.

In addition, the B&W carried out projects that would facilitate the goals of the VCP or Objectives Document. First, the municipality refurbished Pooelestraat and the southern side of Grote Markt, renewing the pavement, both of which had become car-free as a result of the VCP. It completely brought back the market, which had been driven out from the inner city to Westerhaven in the 1960s, to Vismarkt and Grote Markt on April 15th, 1978. In addition, it kept on planting trees in and around the city centre, amounting to about three hundred trees planted in 1981 since the VCP was introduced. Responding to that Open Letter presented the day before the election, Wallage justified the VCP based on these projects: “I will not give way to those who feel that they must support the VVD campaign anonymously. Moreover, I am of the opinion that the sum of the market, trees, and the reaction of the shopping public withstands best against this sort of advertisements.”142

At the local election in 1978, the PvdA of Groningen lost two seats, resulting in sixteen seats. Other two parties in the B&W, the CPN and PPR, also reduced seats from three to two and from two to one, respectively. However, the D’66, which lost seats in the municipal council at the last election, gained three seats, and the PSP, which also lost seats at the last election, regained a seat. As a result, total seats of the left-wing parties were not changed, namely, twenty-three of thirty-nine in total. The PvdA chose to form the left-wing B&W with the CPN and D’66, which consisted of four PvdA wethouders, one CPN wethouder, and one D’66 wethouder. The left-wing parties outside the B&W, the PPR and PSP, endorsed the college programme on which those three parties agreed.
3.3.2 The Effect of the VCP

The Survey by Bout

At the end of January 1979, the first result of the investigations by the municipality was published. This was the result of the questionnaire survey on the economic effect of the VCP, which was conducted by the Department of Planning, the Free University of Amsterdam, led by J. Bout. In order to see the influence on businesses in the inner city four months after the VCP was introduced, this survey was carried out in February and March 1978. Therefore, this was not the comparative survey conducted before and after the VCP, like other municipal surveys. Although the size of the sample was small, with about two hundred businesses sampled of 1,400 businesses in the inner city, diverse businesses were selected in terms of the type of business or the extent of change in traffic caused by the VCP. The survey was responded by 171 businesses. The result of this survey is summarised in the following. 143

Concerning the development of sales, 25% of responding businesses reported a decrease in sales attributed to the VCP, while only five businesses reported an increase thanks to the VCP. The amount of the decrease in sales attributed to the VCP was estimated on average at about 13% on an annual basis. On the other hand, the result did not show a substantial difference dependent on the location of streets or the size of businesses, as pointed out by VVD Councillor Kamminga. However, there was a significant difference between the types of business, and particularly damaged were those shops that sold large commodities, like do-it-yourself articles. Concerning the number of visitors, 26% reported a decrease in visitors attributed to the VCP, while only eight businesses reported an increase. It was estimated that, because of the VCP, visitors to all businesses decreased by 2.2% on an annual basis. This survey also inquired into the increased cost, resulting from the loss of time for freight transport. It revealed that twenty businesses complained of “longer time to look and wait for a parking space for loading as a result of decreased parking spaces”, and that sixty-one businesses complained of “the increase of time for making a detour as a result of the sector division and related increased congestion on the ring road around the inner city [Diepenring]” (Walen & Buit, 1981, p.593). Furthermore, there were twelve businesses that planned to move out of the inner city within two years, with the VCP the “decisive factor”, and four businesses that planned to close down their business.

That is why, the investigation by the municipality itself also showed the negative influence on the inner-city economy, although not so negative as shopkeepers or business organisations insisted. As a result, these organisations intensified their demand to deregulate the VCP. In April, the businesspeople’s association Zuiderdiep144 sent a letter to the B&W and municipal council, asking to lift the sector boundary on Zuiderdiep or allow two-way traffic on Stationsstraat, Munnekeholm, and a part of Herestraat. The KvK in May and the KNOV in June asked the B&W for a “considerable relaxation”145 or “drastic adjustment”146 of the VCP. Their demands included not only those from shopkeepers (demands A-D, p106) but also removing the “cuts”147 on singels such as Ubbo Emmiussingel, which were enforced with the VCP, or introducing the “green wave”148 of
traffic lights on Diepenring. Urged by these demands, at the council committee Traffic and Transport in June, CDA Councillor W. Bakker put a pressing query to Wallage about the B&W’s willingness to realise “sector breakthrough”. Wallage answered that the B&W did not intend to “isolate cash register data”\(^\text{149}\). The investigations were still under way into the effect on traffic and the environment, and, as planned in the beginning, “All those investigations will be finally combined into one analysis. The B&W will base its proposals for changes on that analysis”\(^\text{150}\), said Wallage.

**The Effect on Traffic**

In autumn 1979, the results of the rest of the municipal investigations were published one after another. Table 3.4 shows the overview of these investigations. In addition, the municipality conducted the measurement of noise and vibration in the inner city in spring 1977 and spring 1978, that is, before and after the VCP. In the following, the effect of the VCP would be analysed based on these investigations, in the order of the effect on traffic, the environment, and the economy.\(^\text{151}\)

When the municipality measured noise at twenty-nine locations in the inner city, it simultaneously counted passing traffic. The result showed that the hourly traffic intensity of private cars had reduced by 47% on average before and after the VCP. On the other hand, according to the investigation 3 in Table 3.4, the share of the car of all traffic modes to the inner city had decreased slightly from 36% to 34%. This means that the dramatic decrease in the hourly intensity had resulted from achieving the objective of the VCP, that is, keeping out through traffic from the inner city. The division of the inner city into the four sectors turned out to work as planners expected.

**Table 3.4**

**Investigations on the Effect of the VCP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>title of investigation</th>
<th>area and object</th>
<th>time of investigation</th>
<th>size of sample</th>
<th>investigator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Binnenstadsbezoek, etc.</td>
<td>whole inner city/ those travelling</td>
<td>Sept.-Oct. 1976</td>
<td>counting</td>
<td>municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Enquête binnenstadsbewoners</td>
<td>whole inner city/ inner city residents</td>
<td>Sept. 1977 Sept. 1978</td>
<td>152 in ’77 83 in ’78</td>
<td>DHV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Regio-enquête</td>
<td>whole region/ residents of Groningen (excl. inner city) and regional residents</td>
<td>Sept. 1977 Sept. 1978</td>
<td>1400 in ’77 1400 in ’78</td>
<td>DHV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hurenkamp & Lee (1981b)
Another remarkable effect on traffic was the sharp increase of bus passengers to the inner city. The investigation confirmed a 12% increase on weekdays and 17% increase on Saturday. One plausible factor for this increase is that the regional buses could go, deeply into the inner city, to Grote Markt, as a result of the VCP. Director K. Jongkind of the Drentse Transport Company confirmed, “Thanks to the VCP, we can drive directly to Grote Markt in Groningen. That has brought in many extra passengers.” In response, this regional bus company increased bus drivers by fifteen, it was reported. Another factor is that buses could run on schedule in the inner city after the VCP, because private cars decreased dramatically and bus lanes were introduced on some streets, such as Zuiderdiep. In fact, Director J.P. Bamberg of the Municipal Transport Company remarked that buses could run within Diepenring more easily than before, and concluded, “the VCP was positive for the regularity of the service.”

It was also confirmed that the public impression about traffic had been improved. According to the investigation in Table 3.4, which focused on visitors to the “core”, namely, Grote Markt and Vismarkt, those who regarded the accessibility to the inner city as “very good”, “good” or “moderate” had increased from 64% to 72%. Viewed statistically, traffic accidents had decreased within Diepenring, increased on it, and slightly decreased as a whole. However, the subjective safety of pedestrians and cyclists had been substantially improved. The investigation 6, dealing with citizens outside the inner city within the city and residents in the region, showed that those who agreed completely with the safety being sufficient had increased from 35% to 45% during walking and from 19% to 30% during cycling.

**The Effect on the Environment**

The measurement of noise at twenty-nine locations in the inner city established that the average level of noise had decreased from 67.0 dB(A) to 64.1 dB(A). According to the investigators, the decrease of 3 dB(A) is almost equal to the reduction of noise intensity by half. As can be seen in Figure 3.11, streets with noise of 65 dB(A) or higher had also considerably decreased. This objective improvement favourably influenced the impression among visitors to the inner city. According to the investigation 6 in Table 3.4, those who experienced a “serious nuisance of noise” from traffic had decreased from 10% to 5%.

The impression of the air had also been improved. The investigation 5, whose objects were residents of the inner city, showed that those who sensed odour from traffic had decreased from 37% to 27% during walking and from 57% to 38% during cycling. Also among visitors from the region, those who sensed odour had decreased from 43% to 24%.

The so-called perception value, that is, the impression of the public space among the public, had changed favourably, particularly concerning those streets that were made car-free or refurbished as a result of the VCP. In the investigation 4, passers-by were asked to grade the atmosphere of streets from “very bad”=1 to “very good”=5. According to the result, the score had gone up from 2.89 to 3.42 for the inner city on average, and from
The Effect on the Economy

Besides the survey by Bout, the investigations in Table 3.4 and other investigations, which the municipality or private organisations had conducted independently of the VCP, also provided data related to the effect on the inner-city economy. Because these data did not necessarily show consistent trends, it was, and still is, much more difficult to establish the effect on the economy than that on traffic or the environment.

First, concerning the number of visitors to the whole inner city, the investigation 3 in Table 3.4 revealed the decrease of 9%, from 509,000 to 462,000 per week. The survey by Bout estimated, as mentioned earlier, that visitors to all businesses had decreased by 2.2% per year. However, an investigation was conducted of the frequency to visit the inner-city shops from the city outside the inner city and from the region. Based on this, there had been "no evidently demonstrable differences" (Hurenkamp & Lee, 1981b, p.240) in the frequency per week before and after the VCP. In addition, the municipality had investigated the number of visitors to eighty businesses in the inner city every half year. Although the survey by Bout confirmed a decrease on balance, this investigation showed an increase of 7% in visitors from 1977 to 1978, and also an increase of 4% even if only visitors to retail shops were counted.

That is why, it is difficult to say something with certainty about the trend of the number of visitors to the whole inner city. On the other hand, there emerged an apparent trend concerning the visit to the core. The investigation 4 revealed an increase of 22% in visitors there, from 357,500 to 436,300 per week, and the investigation of the frequency to visit

Figure 3.11. The change of noise before and after the VCP.
Source: Lee & Schoonderbeek (1980)
also confirmed that the frequency to visit the core had become “significantly higher” (Hurenkamp & Lee, 1981b, p.240) after the VCP. In addition, according to the investigation 4, among visitors to the core, those who visited only shops had decreased from 73% to 62%, while those who visited the market, the market plus shops, or cafes had “significantly increased” (p.241).

The business organisations had pointed out the regional function of the city being lost. However, as far as the number of visitors is concerned, any investigations confirmed “no significant difference” in the ratio of visitors from the city to visitors from the region before and after the VCP. On the other hand, concerning expenditure, the investigation 6 confirmed a decrease of 10% in the share of the inner city in the total expenditure. Consistent with this trend, the per capita expenditure in the inner city had decreased by 20%. Furthermore, the investigation 4 revealed a decrease of 30% in the per capita expenditure at the inner city shops, not including at the market. However, investigators do not mention factors that explain this drastic drop in per capita expenditure, and it is indeed difficult to specify them. For example, concerning the makeup of visitors in ages, the survey by Bout, the investigations 3, and 7, combined, established that the makeup of visitors to the whole inner city had “not changed appreciably” (Hurenkamp & Lee, 1981b, p.240). As far as visitors to the core are concerned, those younger than 30 had increased by 2%. Or the share of the car of all traffic modes to the inner city, as far as the visit to shops is concerned, had decreased from 28% to 24%, while the share of the bus/train had increased from 18% to 22%. These changes might have influenced negatively on per capita expenditure, but it is doubtful whether they had brought about such a huge drop. Furthermore, there were data indicating that the inner city was more thriving than the rest of the region even after the VCP. They were from the nationwide survey155 conducted by the KvK every year. According to this, while 19% of businesses in the Province of Groningen had increased their net profit from 1977 to 1978, 24% in the inner city of Groningen had increased it. Or, it was 16% of businesses in the Province that had made more profit than the inflation rate in 1978, and 24% in the inner city.

Indeed, according to the survey by Bout, the inner-city businesses seemed to suffer from serious economic damage by the VCP. But this survey was, after all, a questionnaire survey, that is, based on the opinions from businesspeople. It revealed that more than half, 51%, of businesses regarded the VCP as “more or less negative”. Those businesses could emphasise the negative effect of the VCP regardless of its actual effect.

To sum up, it was, and still is, difficult to say with certainty how the inner-city economy had changed before and after the VCP, and, furthermore, almost impossible to establish to what extent the VCP had contributed to that change. On the other hand, there was an evident effect of the VCP or related projects such as the return of the market. Namely, passers-by had substantially increased in the core and necessarily on the shopping streets around it, and they had come to enjoy activities other than shopping. In addition, taking into account the fact that particularly shopkeepers from sector West complained of a decrease in sales, the municipality conducted an investigation separately for that sector in
autumn 1978. The result was, “no negative relation can be established between the economic development of businesses concerned and the introduction of traffic measures as part of the Traffic Circulation Plan” (GG, 1980b, p.7).

It can be concluded that the VCP had achieved its original objective “to a considerable extent” (Hurenkamp & Lee, 1981b, p.242), as these investigations repeatedly pointed out, and that it had also contributed greatly toward substantiating the Objectives Document, whose central theme was to strengthen the encounter function. Therefore, as long as the B&W held on to these objectives, it did not have to modify the VCP so much. The VCP Midterm Review, which the B&W published in February 1980, took precisely this line.

3.3.3 The Midterm Review

*Increase the attractiveness of the Inner City*

After summarising “the most important results” of various investigations, as mentioned in the previous section, the Midterm Review makes eight remarks in the “Comment on the results of the investigation”. Among them, the first three remarks confirm the achievements in traffic and the environment:

1. The VCP has met the most important objectives of traffic: car traffic, particularly through traffic, has been drastically restrained, public transport has acquired strongly improved accessibility, and bicycle traffic has been improved.

2. With this, the traffic concept of the Broad Local Land Use Plan for the Inner City was at the same time implemented, although the completion and elaboration of the pedestrian priority areas and of the pedestrian co-existence areas needs still closer attention (we still return to this following this short list).

3. The environment-circumstances in the inner city have been substantially improved, not only objectively but also in the judgement of visitors and residents. (pp.7-8)

Concerning the effect on the economy, the Review refers to the investigation that showed a decrease in visitors to the whole inner city, and, saying, “difficult to fathom”, indicates a margin of error caused by the late night shopping, which was introduced after the VCP. On the other hand, the seventh remark regards the development of the number of visitors as “disappointing”, and advocates strengthening the “competitive position” of the inner city through a “specific package of measures”. The following eighth remark, referring to the survey by Bout, argues that this survey is “too temporary” to know “persistent sales-effects”. According to this remark, the municipality agrees with Bout on the necessity of the “second phase of the survey” (pp.7-8).

After these remarks, before turning to concrete measures to modify the VCP, “we want to deeply examine some themes that seem to be of great importance for the inner city policy and thus for the VCP-policy”, says the Review. Here, it emphasises the necessity of urban design adapted to the VCP, as indicated in the second remark. First, it admits that there are some businesses that plan to leave the inner city “based on VCP-reasons”, as the survey by Bout revealed. While it notes, “We do not take these signals lightly”, the Review cautions, “more cars in our inner city, that is, the reversal of the main approach of the VCP,
would have unacceptable results for other elements of the inner city environment”. Successively, it refers to the Objectives Document and Broad Local Land Use Plan. Their foundation was that “what characterises our inner city, such as the markets or the canal, had to be used as the clue for the further development”, that is, to “maintain and develop the characteristic identity of the heart of the city”. In addition, the Review confirms that “an important place was allocated to the design of the open space as an encounter place” in these documents. It stresses, in the following, that the B&W would continue this policy. The characteristic identity of the inner city is “[d]iversity, atmosphere, cheerfulness, and so on”, or “what is called, in urban design jargon, quality of the space”. This identity is “in our judgement - also from an economic viewpoint - the strongest cornerstone for a healthy inner city”. Taking into account demands from the business community, it says, “we do not argue away the accessibility problem” with this policy. However, the Review makes it clear that the accessibility problem “must be placed within the framework of the attractiveness of the inner city” (pp.8-10), which originates from its identity.

Then, it concretely illustrates “measures that further increase the attractiveness”. First, it argues that, although “[r]educed car traffic in the inner city has offered the possibility of clearly renovating the use of the open space”, “the question is whether the design of some areas has been sufficiently adapted to the car-limited situation”. It particularly refers to the route Brugstraat - A-Kerkhof northern side in sector West, on which the design of the street and sidewalks must be improved so that “a more interesting strolling and shopping route emerges”. Second, it argues, concerning some approach routes to the inner city, “reduced car traffic of the city centre would have to have consequences for the design there”, and puts forward Nieuwe Ebbingestraat and Nieuweweg as candidates for renovation. Finally, in addition to these streets, there are still some other streets where, “now that the traffic pattern through these streets has significantly changed, the design of the space must be adapted” (pp.10-1). The Review mentions, as examples, Zwanestraat, Oosterstraat, Steentilstraat, and Folkingestraat.

After arguing for the necessity and measures to adapt to or use the VCP, the Review turns to measures to modify the VCP, in the “Traffic policy” and “Proposed concrete measures”.

**How to Modify**

First of all, it again clearly states the original standpoint of the B&W that the principle of the VCP must be kept intact, saying, “there is no reason to adjust the VCP fundamentally” (p.12). Then, first, it deals with measures for bicycles. The municipality will try to expand parking spaces for bicycles, and “[a]t first, about 500 extra parking possibilities for bicycles will be created on various places in the inner city”. It also refers to the experiment with a “protected, roofed bicycle shed” in the city centre, which was announced in the Policy Plan for 1980. The one-way traffic restriction had been lifted for cyclists only on Broerstraat, as mentioned earlier. The Review states, “we try to exempt cyclists from this one-way traffic where this is possible” (p.14).
Next, the Review mentions measures for buses. It announces that a "package of measures for buses" has been proposed to the municipal council committee, such as bus lanes on Damsterdiep and Westerhaven, and that bus traffic will be facilitated also in other ways, like the adjustment of traffic lights. On the other hand, shopping streets, such as Oosterstraat or Nieuwe Ebbingestraat, had repeatedly complained about buses there, which had increased since the VCP and, in their view, ran too fast, causing noise and odour. The Review promises, “we will take measures to ease the negative results of bus traffic!”, although it mentions only "sound-proofing facilities" (p.14) as concrete measures.

Measures for pedestrians, which are already mentioned in "some themes", are again explained, titled “Improving quality of the space”. The B&W will encourage “some appropriate streets” to “acquire larger attractiveness through arcades or other facilities in the short term” (p.15). In addition, because many cars that avoided Diepenring penetrated into narrow streets between Radesingel and Steentilstraat, the Review proposes making these streets unattractive to through traffic by changing the direction of their one-way traffic.

Therefore, the Review first deals with pedestrians, cyclists, buses, and measures against through traffic, and then starts to talk about measures to facilitate the circulation of cars in the inner city. First of all, concerning Diepenring, it proposes adding an extra lane on the Steentilbrug to ease congestion on Wenschoterkade and Radesingel. The business organisations had asked for the green wave of traffic lights on Diepenring. However, the Review argues that the municipality has already tried to adjust traffic lights to each other there, and rejects a “complete coupling” as impossible and even undesirable. Because it means “a longer wait for traffic that must cross Diepenring”, and “many buses must also make this movement” (p.16).

Shopkeepers in sector West, among others, had demanded to improve the accessibility for cars, pressing for measures such as demands A and B. However, concrete measures in the Review for this sector are at most the faster construction of the parking garage on Sledemennerstraat, which had already been adopted in the Broad Local Land Use Plan, and the improvement of the pedestrian route to the city centre, as mentioned earlier. For the rest, it just says, “In consultation with businesses concerned, we will see whether the accessibility (for car traffic), circulation, and (short) parking capacity can be improved.” Furthermore, although the Review accepts that the subjects of this consultation would include the A-brug and Munnekeholm, where shopkeepers had wanted to resume two-way traffic, it immediately imposes a condition, namely, “if additional measures prevent car traffic without destination in the inner city from being attracted to run through the inner city” (p.16).

Concerning demands for Zuiderdiep, such as demands C and D, the Review does not refer to the demand to lift the sector boundary there, and examines only how to connect Zuiderdiep and the parking garage on Kleine Raamstraat, which had opened the previous year, in 1979, to Diepenring. It concedes that the current route via an “illogical swing”
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(p.15) on Ubbo Emmiusssingel is a “very complicated route” (p.12), and proposes opening either of two routes for drivers, namely, the route Kleine Raamstraat → Phebenstraat → Hereplein or the route Kleine Raamstraat → Coehoornsingel → Herestraat → Hereplein. In exchange for this improvement of accessibility, the crossing on Zuiderdiep, connecting two parts of Herestraat, should be reconstructed so that the “character of pedestrian priority” (p.17) is emphasised and, simultaneously, an “extra obstruction” (p.12) emerges against many drivers who ignore the sector boundary here, says the Review.

The business organisations had also demanded to remove the “cuts” on singels. The Review expresses the willingness to examine only the place of those cuts to prevent an unnecessary detour, on condition that singels should not have an “inner-ring character” (p.17).

The survey by Bout revealed that, as a result of the sector division, many businesses had suffered from a delay of freight transport, resulting in the increase of the operating cost. The Review, first of all, dismisses the idea of granting exemption to all lorries from the sector boundaries, considering the difficulty to maintain such a system or the negative influence on bus traffic. Instead, it proposes a system in which freight is gathered into a vehicle “adapted to the - small-scale - character of the inner city”, and only this vehicle is allowed to cross the sector boundaries. “We intend to elaborate such a scheme in close consultation with transporters’ organisations” (p.17), concludes the Review.

It can be recognised that the Midterm Review, as a whole, put emphasis on furthermore substantiating the principles of the VCP or Objectives Document. Concerning measures to facilitate the circulation of cars, for which the business community had pressed, its proposals were modest or vague, with concrete measures relegated to further examination.

3.3.4 The Polarised Reaction

The Reaction from Citizens

At the end of the Midterm Review, the B&W explains the “further procedure” succinctly, but it refers only to the procedure within the municipal council. In fact, the B&W arranged four public hearings in total, of which two of the latter half were specifically intended for businesspeople and their organisations respectively.

As soon as the Review was published, residents around Sledemennerstraat, where the faster construction of a parking garage was proposed, launched an opposition movement. They feared its negative influence on the residential environment, and published a counterproposal of a swimming pool or sent a letter to the municipal council. They also attended the first public hearing, which was held on March 25th, 1980, and raised an objection to the plan by turns. However, more importantly, this hearing was attended only by fifteen in total, including businesspeople. That is why, Wallage, who attended this meeting as the representative of the municipality, concluded, “The disturbance around the Traffic Circulation Plan under citizens turns out to be obviously less than expected”157.
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the second hearing on April 2nd, residents between Radesingel and Steentilstraat, who had been annoyed with through traffic since the VCP, proposed concrete measures for this problem, such as reversing one-way traffic on Radebinnensingel between Moeskersgang and Trompstraat. However, again, this hearing was poorly attended by nineteen, including businesspeople and members of the ENFB and the Association of Public Transport Passengers (ROVER). In addition, the public could, as always, submit written opinions concerning the Review to the B&W, but those from individuals, including businesspeople, turned out to be only twelve in total. That is why, it can be concluded, as Wallage mentioned, that the public as a whole at least did not recognise the VCP or the Review, which was written in consistence with the principle of the VCP, as a serious issue.

Furthermore, residents’ groups in the inner city, six in total, submitted written opinions. According to these opinions, except for the group around Sledemennerstraat, which opposed that parking garage, all of them were afraid of deregulating the VCP for cars, or asked for a “green street”, a “residential street”, measures against through traffic, and so on. In other words, their demands were consistent with the Objectives Document, VCP or Review, and no group asked for lifting the sector boundaries, while shopkeepers had persistently done.

Among citizens’ organisations, the ENFB responded. Two months after the VCP was introduced, the Nieuwsblad carried the view of the ENFB on the VCP. It was “not a thorough plan” for the ENFB, but, because “it [was] almost for the first time that a choice [was] really made in favour of other traffic modes than the car”, the ENFB regarded the VCP as a “step on the right track”\(^{158}\). That is why, in response to the Review at the public hearing or in a written opinion, the ENFB asked for adhering to the principle of the VCP, criticising the attempt to modify it as “too early” (GG, 1981, Bijlage I), raised an objection to allowing two-way traffic on Munnekeholm and the A-brug, and opposed the parking garage on Sledemennerstraat. In addition, it demanded to extend the exemption for cyclists from one-way traffic restrictions. On the other hand, the ROVER presented an idea, at the public hearing, of introducing “trolley buses” into busy streets, taking into account the repeated complaints against buses from shopkeepers.

The Reaction from the Business Community

The reaction from the business community was utterly different from that from residents and citizens’ organisations. It criticised the Review, saying, “the Midterm Review responds to the complaints from the business community and the results of the investigations too little”. It asked Wallage whether there was at all “some room”\(^{159}\) to incorporate its demands into the standpoint of the municipality, and declined to attend those two hearings arranged for it. Five business organisations, including the KvK, submitted written opinions, each of which complained, “the wishes were ignored or the proposals were not concretely worked out”\(^{160}\), and made demands or complaints in turns that had been voiced repeatedly so far, like reopening the route A-straat → the Boteringebrug, lifting the sector boundary on Zuiderdiep, or a nuisance caused by buses on shopping streets. In addition, the KvK regarded the proposal in the Review to connect Zuiderdiep to Diepenring as “too
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complicated. The idea of allowing only specially-designed lorries to cross the sector boundaries "can offer no total solution" (GG, 1981, Bijlage I), according to the Working Group Transport Organisations. The Consultative Body Small- and Medium-Sized Business also submitted a letter. This body was established in 1979 on the initiative of the KNOV to facilitate mutual understanding between the municipality and the business community. Expressing its approval for the opinion of the KvK, the Body pressed for quickly putting the adjustment of the VCP into effect.

The Second Survey by Bout

When the B&W published the Midterm Review, it announced that it would propose to the municipal council a “definitive package of proposals”, with submitted opinions taken into consideration, before the summer vacation the same year. However, even after the summer vacation, the definitive proposal did not emerge. Because other traffic plans, which were being prepared at the same time, were also considerably behind the schedule, Wallage was criticised by councillors of various political parties, including his own, at the council committee Traffic and Transport on October 27th. He replied that the municipality had "worked hard on the evaluation of the VCP" and the work had been "almost completed". However, after all, the B&W did not present the definitive proposal within the year.

In January 1981, U.G.H. van der Werff, the chairman of the KvK, severely criticised Wallage concerning the VCP in his new year speech. According to him, while there had been “excellent contacts” with Wethouder of Economy Barmentloo, who had also served as chairman of the Consultative Body, the consultation with Wallage had not proceeded over “any adjustment of the Traffic Circulation Plan that [was] unfriendly for the business community”. Without completing the modification of the VCP, Wallage resigned as wethouder to advance into national politics in April, and the wethouder of traffic was succeeded by Rein Zunderdorp (PvdA).

The second survey by Bout, which was mentioned in the Review, was conducted of the same businesses as investigated in the first survey in February and March 1980, that is, to see the situation two years and four months after the VCP was introduced. This result was gradually coming out before and after the summer vacation in 1981. The following is the summary of this result.

First, businesses reporting a decrease in sales had dwindled from 25% two years before to 14% this time, and the amount of the decrease had also diminished from 13% to less than 8%. The number of visitors had also improved. Businesses reporting its decrease had dwindled from 26% to 11%, and visitors were estimated to have decreased by 1.15% on annual basis, against 2.2% last time. The delay of freight transport, however, had not improved. While the first survey revealed that there were sixteen businesses that planned to move out of the inner city or close down their business within two years, it turned out that only four among these businesses put their plans into practice. On the other hand, concerning the investment by businesses in maintaining or rebuilding their properties,
there was hardly any change that could be attributed to the VCP. Furthermore, there emerged data showing rather the improvement of the inner city, before and after the VCP, as location for business. Namely, in 1978 and 1979, compared to preceding two years, more businesses were located in the inner city, the number of vacancies decreased, and the term of being vacant became shorter.

On June 10th, new *Wethouder* Zunderdorp attended a symposium of traffic experts. Keeping in mind these data, he said in his speech, "The total balance of the traffic plan for the inner city of Groningen is positive". According to him, “The plan is not seriously controversial any more”. Concerning the delay of its adjustment, he said, "even small adjustments of the plan often have disturbing side effects. Therefore, every change must be checked very carefully, and that takes more time than expected."  

In November, the second survey by Bout was officially published, and at the end of the year, finally, the B&W published the draft of the proposal to the municipal council, the Inner City Traffic Examined.  

### 3.3.5 The Inner City Traffic Examined

*Further Forward*

Whereas the Midterm Review had seventeen pages, this draft has nearly eighty pages, except for appendices, and elaborates not only on principles for the modification but also on concrete measures, with precise plan maps.

In the introduction, “1. General”, it explains the general policy and procedure taken for the modification. In “1.1. Further forward”, which deals with the former, it declares that the “first undertone” of this draft is “to optimally use the possibilities that are offered by the Traffic Circulation Plan” or “to further develop these potential possibilities in the framework of the Local Land Use Plan for the Inner City”. Successively, referring to the fact that, according to the second survey by Bout, more than half (53%) of businesses still regarded the VCP as negative, it introduces the “second undertone” that the Traffic Circulation Plan must be adjusted so that, while the “advantages” of the VCP are maintained, the “disadvantages” are removed. However, it immediately cautions that “the margins are small” to remove the disadvantages, while maintaining the advantages. The reason is, “Maintaining the advantages means holding on to the principle of keeping out through auto traffic”, and, in order to keep out through traffic, “a sector division remains the most appropriate way”. That is why, the “first precondition” in evaluating measures to modify the VCP was, says the draft, to retain the sector divisions, except for three cases touched upon later in which “limited possibilities” were found. As the “third precondition”, it again indicates that the modification could not help being modest:

We have always guarded against too optimistic expectations with regard to the effect of particular proposals for modification. We wanted to completely maintain what was achieved for the quality of the inner city by keeping out through auto traffic, because otherwise the Traffic Circulation Plan could degenerate into a poor compromise. (pp.8-10)
It concludes, “We regard the introduction of the Traffic Circulation Plan as a successful measure and want to go further forward with it. This document is the means for that” (p.10).

In “1.2. Procedure”, the draft first refers to public participation after the Review was published. According to it, “During the extensive participation round (…), many written and spoken reactions have come.” In fact, the opportunities provided for participation were at most, as mentioned earlier, four public hearings, of which two were cancelled. Two were indeed held, but both of them did not attract so many people. The number of written opinions submitted was not so many, either. However, because “participation has already thoroughly taken place”, the B&W regards a “second extensive participation round” not only as unnecessary but also as “undesirable”, considering the delay resulting from it. The only provision for participation at this stage was to publish and make available this draft before the relevant council committee dealt with this, so that “those who wish it can still inform the municipal executive of their feelings about this” (pp.11-2).

From chapter 2, the draft takes almost the same structure as the Review, namely, summarising the result of the investigations, commenting on it with eight remarks, considering “some themes”, and proposing concrete measures. Its content is also almost the same until “some themes”. However, as a matter of course, it refers to the second survey by Bout, summarising the investigations. Based on this survey, the eighth remark in the “Comment” declares that the B&W does not have to consider any longer the negative influence of the VCP on the economy: “we do not regard those data as worrying any longer, which are related to the development of sales at the investigated businesses in the inner city. We, with the investigators, expect that these negative effects will still further decrease.” (p.23)

The Review introduced the fact, based on the first survey by Bout, that there were some businesses that planned to leave “based on VCP-reasons”, and promised not to “take these signals lightly”. While the draft succeeds these sentences as they were, it adds that “it is remarkable” that, according to his second survey, “only a very limited number has actually realised those plans two years later” (pp.24-5). On the other hand, the seventh remark, which deals with the “disappointing” development of the number of visitors, urges, more clearly than in the Review, the necessity of urban design adapted to the VCP: “we find the development of the number of visitors disappointing, certainly considering the various positive effects of the VCP. We, however, expect that this can be improved in the longer term through a better use of the possibilities that are potentially present as a result of the Traffic Circulation Plan, particularly in those areas that lie within Diepenring but do not belong to the genuine city centre. (p.23)

**Measures**

In “The measures”, the draft starts with measures for bicycles, like the Review. It confirms that about seven hundred parking spaces for bicycles have been created in the inner city, and that the B&W has designated two locations, on Martinikerkhof and Pelsterstraat, for
Concerning measures for buses, first of all the draft examines the nuisance caused by buses on shopping streets. While expressing the willingness to restrict their maximum speed to 30 to 40 km/h within Diepenring, it confesses that "there are no legal possibilities of imposing such a speed limit", and that the B&W cannot help relying on "service stipulations" of public transport companies. It also makes it clear that the B&W wants to avoid using physical measures, such as speed bumps, as much as possible, particularly because they can undermine the comfort of bus passengers. Based on the same reason, the B&W gives up reconstructing the crossing on Zuiderdiep, as proposed in the Review. Instead, the draft expects that urban design for pedestrians, which is urged repeatedly in this document, can have a "calming effect" (p.39).

On A-Kerkhof northern side and Vismarkt, as a result of the return of the market, a "chaotic situation" had emerged, with buses steering in two-way directions through vehicles parked by market vendors. The municipality examined an idea, says the draft, of letting buses toward Grote Markt in a one-way direction, and returning them via Zuiderdiep. However, this idea could lead to too much loss of time for buses. After all, the draft dismisses this idea, saying, "we find it dubious, also in terms of principles, to 'improve' the circulation of bus traffic in this way" (pp.41-2), and mentions the planned renovation of Vismarkt, through which market vendors may not have to park their vehicles there any more. On the other hand, shopkeepers on Oosterstraat, among others, had persistently complained about...
The Traffic Circulation Plan

buses. The VCP designated Oosterstraat as a main route for buses from the south to the city centre, resulting in 720 buses per day passing through that street. The draft aims at cutting back regional buses, which accounted for 240 per day there. To be concrete, “It seems to us a right starting point to bring back a substantial part of the [remaining] terminuses of regional buses from Grote Markt to Zuiderdief” (p.45).

As for the measures to facilitate bus traffic, the draft confirms that a bus lane will be soon introduced on Westerhaven, or that the municipality has applied for subsidies for bus lanes on Damsterdiep and Hereweg. In addition, it plans to install traffic lights that bus drivers can influence “wherever it is good for bus traffic” (p.47).

For pedestrians, it argues that, on some streets, the loss of an “important traffic function” through the VCP is not immediately followed with the increased attractiveness, and promises, “We will pay more attention to the development of these streets” (p.73), such as Brugstraat − A-Kerkhof northern side or Folkingestraat, which were mentioned also in the Review. For the area between Radesingel and Steentilstraat, the draft presents a concrete plan to keep out through traffic, which incorporates opinions of residents.

Then, what kind of measures were included in the draft to improve the circulation of cars? Particularly, how were those issues settled that had been relegated to further examination in the Review? First, the draft again clearly rejects a “complete coupling” (p.49) of traffic lights on Diepenring, referring to the negative effect not only on buses but also on cyclists, who have already complained about a longer wait at intersections.

Among demands from sector West, demands A and B are after all firmly denied. The reason is, “The principle has been that no route must not emerge that could be attractive to car traffic without destination in the inner city” (p.53). The only measure adopted in the draft to improve the accessibility of sector West is to reverse one-way traffic on Broerstraat or make it two-way. With this, argues the draft, drivers can proceed into sector West via Oude Ebbingestraat and Rode Weeshuisstraat. Moreover, against demand B, it rather puts forward a measure to strengthen the sector boundary here, based on the fact that drivers had continuously ignored the car-free zone on A-Kerkhof western side. It presents a plan to reconstruct the intersection between A-Kerkhof northern side and western side so that cars from the east physically cannot turn left here (Figure 3.13). The trespass toward the north will disappear automatically, because regional buses running in the opposite direction will increase in the future, anticipates the draft. In addition, although the Review advocated the faster construction of the parking garage on Sledemennenstraat, taking into account demands from shopkeepers, the draft has turned to a more cautious attitude, saying that the B&W “wants to have a good insight into the occupancy rate of the current parking opportunity” (p.70) before taking a decision on this garage.

Shopkeepers on Zuiderdief or Herestraat had demanded to allow drivers to turn directly from Zuiderdief to Herestraat (demand D). The draft denies this, “because then it is not avoidable that a through west-east connection emerges over the whole length of
Gedempte Zuiderdiep” (p.55). Necessarily, the draft also “can give no result” (p.58) to the demand to lift the sector boundary on Zuiderdiep (demand C). Between those two routes that the Review proposed to improve the connection of Zuiderdiep to Diepenring, the draft has chosen the route via Coehoornsingel (Figure 3.14). According to it, with this measure,

**Figure 3.13.** Reconstruct the intersection to strengthen the sector boundary.

**Figure 3.14.** A hole on the sector boundary.
The B&W has simultaneously created a “hole” intentionally on the boundary between sector South and East, leading to Herebinnensingel. The B&W expects that this hole will enable particularly freight transport, which has consistently suffered from a delay, to move “in a rather simpler way” between the sectors. The draft adds that, although the B&W examined whether it was still possible to create “such small holes” (pp.57-8) for freight transport on other sector boundaries, it turned out that there were no possibilities other than the above mentioned hole through Broerstraat.

The demand to remove the cuts on singels is clearly turned down this time. Also concerning their place, although the idea of moving the “barrier” at Ubbo Emmiusstraat was thoroughly studied, it was after all “not found meaningful”, according to the draft. The B&W has also conducted a “thorough study” on granting exemption to freight transport from the sector boundaries. In conclusion, the draft rejects, more completely than the Review, general exemption to all lorries:

> In our opinion, the conclusion of this policy document must be that it is not possible on practical reasons, not meaningful in terms of urban planning, and not strictly necessary in terms of the business economy to grant all sorts of freight transport provisions that enable them to cross the sector boundaries. (p.58)

As an alternative, “the ‘regulated freight transport’, which orients itself specially toward the inner city, can perhaps take an exceptional position”, it says and, therefore, there are still reasons “to continue discussion with these transporters”. However, the draft is frankly “not so hopeful” (p.58-9) of this discussion, because, as seen earlier, the Working Group Transport Organisations has already made it clear that it opposes a system in which only a particular vehicle is exempted.

The draft, more clearly than the Review, opts for holding on to the principle of the VCP, and, far from deregulating it, developing its possibilities. Those three cases mentioned in the introduction are in fact two holes on Broerstraat and Coehoornsingel, and exemption of a particular type of freight transport from the sector boundaries. Indeed, compared to demands made by shopkeepers or business organisations, these can be called “limited possibilities”, very modest or still uncertain.

### 3.3.6 Decision on the Modification

Although the opportunities were limited to respond to the draft, some organisations submitted written opinions to the B&W. The ROVER raised a strong objection, saying “Unacceptable”, against the idea of bringing back the terminuses of regional buses from Grote Markt to Zuiderdiep. It argued that this idea was contrary to an “essential objective of the VCP, that is, to improve the accessibility of the city centre for public transport and slow traffic”. The Gedeputeerde Staten (B&W at the provincial level) also opposed this idea based on the fact that many regional bus passengers were using the terminuses on Grote Markt, and, like the ROVER, pointed out the contradiction with the VCP. On the other hand, the ENFB supported this idea from the standpoint of cyclists. Instead, it expressed anxiety about the two holes proposed in the draft. The hole on Broerstraat would cause danger to
cyclists, it feared, and that on Coehoornsingel would increase traffic on the route Radesingel – Winschoterkade, which constituted a part of Diepenring and was already congested. Among the business organisations, the KvK criticised the draft as a whole, saying that it could hardly mean a “true contribution to better accessibility for the business community”, and demanded an “extensive relaxation of the sector policy” 173 . Businesspeople in sector West, the KNOV, the businesspeople’s association Inner City South174, and so on also asked for further deregulation of the VCP.

The definitive proposal to the municipal council was announced in the Nieuwsblad dated April 10th, 1982. This turned out to be almost the same as the draft. It did not accept any further relaxation of the sector boundaries. However, it withdrew the idea of moving the terminuses of regional buses, and hoped that the renovation of Oosterstraat, which had already been proposed in the draft, would simultaneously relieve the nuisance of buses. The same month, the representatives of the business community who had participated in the Consultative Body decided to withdraw from the body, because “those businesspeople, after three years of consultation, [did] not have the impression that their input [was] really taken into account”. The modification of the VCP was, according to them, “the best proof for this”.175

The municipal council conducted the first round of discussion on the proposal on May 3rd. While the nongovernment parties (CDA, VVD, GPV) regarded the proposed holes as insufficient in improving the accessibility for cars, these holes were “already very questionable adjustment” for the left-wing parties outside the B&W (PSP, PPR). Zunderdorp responded that these holes were “sufficient improvement” for freight transport, and at the same time included “too many bends” to attract through traffic. Although the business organisations or VVD had demanded to exempt all lorries from the sector boundaries to the last, he firmly rejected, because “the whole plan [was] undermined”176 with it. The second round of discussion was conducted on May 14th. A motion was made, which asked for completely scrapping the plan of the parking garage on Sledemennerstraat, and adopted, only with the CDA opposing. In addition, twenty-one motions in total were made, among which one made by the PPR and PSP opposed the hole on Broerstraat and got a support from one PvdA councillor177. However, after all, these twenty-one motions were all rejected. The proposal to modify the VCP was approved without change except for the above parking garage.

3.3.7 Theoretical Considerations
The assumption that the VCP reflected public opinion was further confirmed by the scarce response to the Review from the public. Moreover, various investigations proved that the VCP had drastically reduced cars in the inner city, improved the environment there as a result, and substantially contributed toward facilitating the bustle and encounter function in the city centre. On the other hand, the effect on the economy was difficult to specify. Taking into account also the result of the second survey by Bout, it can be said, at least, that its economic effect turned out to be not so serious as shopkeepers or business organisations had insisted.
While citizens as a whole accepted the VCP, they did not initiate outstanding actions to protect it during the modification process. However, relying on the above evident facts, the B&W, particularly the political leaders of the PvdA, held on to the principle of the VCP, despite persistent demands for deregulation from the business community. Indeed, two holes were opened, but these would not have attracted so much through traffic, as Zunderdorp explained and citizens can witness now. While demands from the business community had been hardly accepted, those from residents’ or citizens’ organisations had been partly incorporated. The resulting changes had also been consistent with the principle of the VCP, and there were even changes that rectified the deviation from the VCP, such as the withdrawal of the plan to move terminuses of regional buses.

The PvdA leaders maintained the principle of the VCP, and rather opted for further substantiating and developing what the VCP or Objectives Document strived for. The CDA or VVD criticised such an attitude as rigidly holding on to political principles. However, exactly by holding on to the party frameworks, just like when the VCP was decided, the political leaders of the PvdA could not only incorporate public opinion or sentiment but also substantiate liberal democracy. That is why, although there were very limited opportunities for public participation, again like when the VCP was decided, the modification process was completely compatible with liberal democracy. And it indeed realised what liberal democracy strives for, because the VCP could be regarded, based on public support and its positive effects as mentioned so far, as contributing to the public interest.

Notes

1 This chapter is based on Tsubohara (2003a, 2005, 2007a).
2 Tweede Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening
3 gebundelde deconcentratie
4 The Randstad area is the western part of The Netherlands that includes a circle of big cities, namely, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, and The Hague, with the less populated “Green Hart” in the middle.
5 Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe
6 Struktuurplan Groningen 1969
7 Struktuurplan Binnenstad Groningen 1969
8 Verkeersplan-centrum Groningen
9 Parkeerplan Sentrum-Groningen 1970-1975
10 H.M. Goudappel was a traffic engineer who was commissioned to draft this plan.
11 The total amounted to 1,500 houses. These were renewed, replaced or sold through the project Operatie Binnenstad from the late 1970s to the early 1980s.
12 Concerning the Traffic Plan, even the New Left activists as well as the Nieuwsblad praised the way of involving the public in its planning process, according to Hajema (2001).
13 The PvdA had two layers of regional organisation in those days, namely, a federation (federatie)
and, below it, some divisions (afdelingen).

14 They were the ARP, CHU, KVP, and GPV. The first three formed the unified party group CDA after the election in 1970.


16 Dienst Stadsontwikkeling en Volkshuisvesting
17 Dienst Publieke Werken
19 In addition, the CPN and PSP opposed it as a party. The Harmonie was torn down in 1973.

18 Dienst Stadsontwikkeling en Volkshuisvesting
17 Dienst Publieke Werken
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20 N.A. de Boer, H.M. Goudappel, H. Hertzberger, and J.G. Lambooy
21 Doeleindennota
22 Maatstavennota
23 Nota Doelstelling Binnenstad Groningen
24 Doelstellingennota
25 ontmoetingsfunctie
26 globaal bestemmingsplan
27 This experiment began on February 16th, 1976. However, shopkeepers along the street strongly opposed, and the experiment was suspended on September 7th, before the scheduled period.
28 Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, February 4th, 1974
29 Discussienota Grote Markt
30 Photographs in this study were taken by the author from 2003 to 2008, unless sources are specified.
31 Werkgroep Binnenstad Groningen
32 In total 402 people responded.
33 These experiments were after all not carried out.
34 Groningers over hun Binnenstad
35 The market returned to Vismarkt from Westerhaven on March 21st, 1975. However, it was held only on Friday at first.
36 Nieuwsblad, December 3rd, 1974
37 Remark by W. Bakker. Nieuwsblad, December 3rd, 1974
38 Remark by E.G. IJspeert. Nieuwsblad, December 10th, 1974
39 Verkeerscirculatieplan Groningen Basis-Gegevens
40 Nieuwsblad, March 15th, 1975
41 ibid., April 10th, 1975
42 Verkeerscirculatieplan Deel II
43 ACW-project. The municipality could get generous subsidies through this programme.
44 Nieuwsblad, May 28th, 1975
45 His official title was andragoog.
46 He was also an active member of the PvdA.
47 Nieuwsblad, July 5th, 1975
48 ibid., July 26th, 1975
Remark by Van Dijk, who was engaged in drafting the VCP as a civil servant in those days.

Later, the Nieuwsblad amalgamated with other newspapers in the northern region into the Dagblad.

As organisations, the KVO, KvK, Royal Dutch Tourist Association, Royal Dutch Automobile Club, Catholic Transporters Organisation, and so on. As companies, the Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, Amrobank and so on.

This opinion was reported in the Nieuwsblad dated August 27th, 1975.

They also submitted a written opinion to the prime minister and other ministers.

Remark by Wil van den Berg who made this plan.

Strictly speaking, the division into the four sectors was not introduced or enforced on this night. In order to give the legal force to the traffic signs that were installed or changed as a result of the VCP, the B&W had to decide on each of them. The number of those signs amounted to 1,300, and the B&W could not process these in time. In addition, it took time to make the new regulations widely known. As a result, the police could begin the control over offences from October 10th.
Concerning traffic planning, they invited M't Hart from Amsterdam in March, 1975. 

Concerning the Objectives Document, see Hajema (2001). Concerning the broad local land use plan, see Tsubohara (2003b)

The Groningen federation (federatie) consisted of four divisions (afdelingen) until 1970.

Except for two wethouders, Van den Berg and Hendriks

Noorddijk

jaarverslag

from October 1974 to October 1975

district team Korrweg/ de Hoogte

wijkteamraad

beschrijvingsbrief

from October 1972 to September 1973

the description letter for the DTC meeting on May 21st, 1975

wijkraad

the description letter for the DTC meeting on October 23rd, 1974

Onze Binding, December 1971

from November 1975 to November 1976

the letter from Wallage to (district) councillors, (district) executive members and district team members in February 1972

kringlijn

the description letter for the DTC meeting on October 8th, 1975

from October 1968 to October 1969

from December 1970 to December 1971

Stedebouw

Naar Betere Fietsvoorzieningen in Groningen

the report of the meeting of the working group Urban Planning on December 13th, 1972

from December 1971 to October 1972

Onze Binding, January 1969

ibid., February 1972

De Nieuwe Elite van de PvdA

topkader. It mainly consists of councillors and executive members.

from November 1976 to September 1977

the description letter for the DTC meeting on October 8th, 1975

Concept voor een Socialistisch Gemeenteprogram

Gemeenteprogramma 74-78

Integraal Beleidsplan 1975-1979

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Middel (1976) calculates that there are 250 party members “who regularly develop activities politically and organisationally for the division” (pp.39-40).

the annual report 1974/75

kadaverdiscipline

Onze Binding, October 1968

Stichting Aktiviteiten Binnenstad in Groningen

Nieuwsblad, October 24th, 1977

This is the highest court of administrative litigation in The Netherlands.

Nieuwsblad, December 9th, 1977

ibid., October 24th, 1977

ibid., October 26th, 1977

ibid., November 3rd, 1977

ibid., April 11th, 1978

Groep Gedupeerde Ondernemers Stad Groningen

Nieuwsblad, May 30th, 1978

gewenningsperiode, ibid., May 3rd, 1978

belevingswaarde

Ministry of Transport and Public Works, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Health and Environment

Gemeenteprogramma 78-82

Nieuwsblad, May 26th, 1978

In these days, its name was ENWB (Eerste, Enige, Echte Wielrijders Bond).

Nieuwsblad, May 30th, 1978

The following data are based on Walen and Buit (1981).

ondernemersvereniging Zuiderdiep

Nieuwsblad, June 1st, 1979

ibid., June 8th, 1979

knippen

groene golf

Nieuwsblad, June 6th, 1979

ibid., January 31st, 1979

The following data are based on Lee and Schoonderbeek (1980), Walen and Buit (1981), and Hurenkamp and Lee (1981a, 1981b).

Nieuwsblad, June 15th, 1982

ibid., June 2nd, 1979

kern

Enquête Regionale Bedrijfsontwikkeling

VCP Tussenbalans

Nieuwsblad, March 26th, 1980

ibid., November 23rd, 1977

ibid., April 8th, 1980

Quoted from the written opinion submitted by the KvK (GG, 1981, Bijlage I)
Such as *Nota Verkeer en Vervoeror Plan 8*. The former was a traffic plan for the whole city area, and the latter was a new bus line scheme which tried to connect surrounding residential neighbourhoods each other.

The following data are based on Walen and Buit (1981).